



Political Generation Next:

AMERICA'S YOUNG

ELECTED LEADERS

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YELP PROJECT TEAM

The Young Elected Leaders Project was developed and implemented by a team at the Eagleton Institute of Politics including the following Eagleton faculty and staff:

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Everyone at the Eagleton Institute of Politics will always remember Jessica Roberts with fondness and sadness at her untimely death. She contributed unflagging enthusiasm and dedication to the Young Elected Leaders Project.



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We are especially indebted to the young elected leaders who completed our survey and participated in our conference. We began the project with a blank slate, and it was they who made it possible for us to sketch this initial picture of the experiences and attitudes of young officeholders. We thank them, not only for their contribution to our work, but for the contribution to American leadership they have made by stepping forward to serve in public office.

The project team wishes to thank the many colleagues and Institute staff who worked on the Young Elected Leaders Project during its several stages. Among those who provided valuable assistance, support and advice were: Lucy Baruch; Susan Carroll; Kathleen Casey; Corey Cook; Cheryl Gaffney; Michael Hagen; Danielle Heggs; Krista Jenkins; Jane Junn; Karl Kurtz; Beth Leech; Chris Lenart; Elizabeth Matto; Carolyn Miller; Gilda Morales; Joanne Pfeiffer; Linda Phillips; Ingrid Reed; Alan Rosenthal; Kira Sanbonmatsu; Michael Soga; John Weingart; Sandy Wetzel; Shari Yeager; Cliff Zukin. Students who assisted us in many ways throughout the project included: Julie Abrahamsen; Alanna Chan; Arpan Dasgupta; Paul Kaster; Chris Monahan; Danielle Porcaro; Gus Sara.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The findings in this report are drawn from research about young elected officials conducted in 2002 by the Eagleton Institute of Politics as part of the Young Elected Leaders Project.

Between May 31 and September 30, 2002, the Institute conducted a national survey of elected officials who were age 35 and younger at that time. The survey included mayors and council members (or the equivalent) who serve in cities with populations of 30,000 or greater, state legislators, statewide elected officials, and officials who serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Creating a database of these young leaders required the use of a number of resources.

The membership list of the National League of Cities included approximately 90% of U.S. cities with populations equaling or exceeding 30,000. Project staff contacted officials in each of these cities and requested information about young elected leaders serving there. Young officials serving in the remaining cities of this size were not included in our research. Also, thirteen cities either did not return phone calls from the project staff or contacted us after the survey was completed.

Because there is no systematic collection of data regarding the age of officials, we were forced to rely on the knowledge and courtesy of municipal offices, where staff were sometimes reluctant to reveal any information or were uncertain about whether officials met our criteria. Some gave opinions about the approximate ages of officials but would not make contact information available. Therefore, we assume that there may be inaccuracies or omissions.

The National Conference of State Legislatures provided a list of state lawmakers within the target age range. Information about statewide elected officials came from several sources, including the National Association of State Treasurers, the National Lieutenant Governors' Association, and the National Association of Secretaries of State. Young members of Congress were identified from available public records.

Eight hundred fourteen members of the target population were contacted by mail and asked to complete the survey either by mail or on-line. Three hundred eighty young elected leaders (YELs) responded to the survey. Two hundred six respondents completed the survey by mail, and 184 completed the survey on-line. After the initial contact, four additional contacts were made with members of the population who had not responded to the survey to request that they do so. Respondents and non-respondents did not differ significantly on gender or party, two variables for which we had comparable data. The firm Schulman, Ronca, and Bucavalas, Inc. hosted and distributed the survey.

Comparisons between young elected leaders (YELs) and their peers who do not serve in elective office are based on data from a large, multi-phase study of civic engagement in America (Scott Keeter, Cliff Zukin, Molly Andolina, and Krista Jenkins, *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait*, CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning and Engagement, 2002). That study, referred to here as AGP (A Generational Portrait) was designed to document civic attitudes and behavior and the distinct ways in which each generation approaches politics and public life. We compared the YELs with AGP respondents aged 18 - 35.

At the outset of our project, we determined that our database would include any elected official born on or after January 1, 1967. We selected this date because the difference between 2002, when we began the project, and 1967 is 35 years. As a result, any young elected official who was 35 at the time our survey went into the field but turned 36 later in 2002 was not included in the research.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of today's top leaders in elective office first won public office at age 35 or younger. If tomorrow's top leadership is likely to come from today's young elected leaders (YELs), then it is important for us to understand who they are, what forces have affected them, and where they stand on issues and ideas about people, politics and government.

In 2002, the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University embarked on a pioneering national study of young officeholders. We identified and surveyed elected officials age 35 and under in three categories: federal (members of Congress); state (statewide elected officials and state legislators); and local (mayors and municipal council members from cities with populations of 30,000 or more). In May 2003, Eagleton convened *Political Generation Next: America's Young Elected Leaders*. This was the first national conference for young elected leaders, an occasion to explore issues raised in our research and discuss the challenges of public leadership facing the next generation. This report contains research findings from our census, survey and conference.

As a snapshot of young elected leaders in the United States, our survey depicts a group similar to elected leaders overall. YELs are overwhelmingly male, Caucasian, Christian, well-educated and well-off. Two-thirds are married and almost half are parents. More than a third grew up in families where politics was discussed very often, and just under a third reported having one or more relatives who served in elective or appointive office. YELs are doers and joiners who exhibit strong social trust. Half are Democrats and a slightly smaller percentage are Republicans, with much smaller numbers labeling themselves independents or something else. More label themselves as "moderate" than as either conservative or liberal, although the conservatives outnumber the liberals. With regard to issues, YELs tend to conform to partisan patterns.

For the conference, we deliberately sought a demographic mix, so the 47 participants were not a statistically representative sample of the total population of YELs. As a group, they were smart, energetic, and friendly. Coming from all corners of the country, different parties, and varied ideological orientations, they shared a sophisticated understanding of American democracy and an interest in improving it.

Conference organizers agreed that much of what YELs described about their experiences as officeholders was more characteristic of their tenure in office than of their age. As political practitioners, they sounded and acted like newly elected officials rather than distinctively young elected officials. Most obviously, as their actions affirm, the young elected leaders resemble public leaders across the country in their belief in the electoral system and its political processes. The YELs also exhibited a striking sense of personal efficacy, a "can do" attitude rooted in the belief that they have what it takes to get things done.

The challenges and benefits YELs experience differ as widely as their personal and political circumstances, varying with level of office; gender; and marital, parental and professional status. Nonetheless, most conference participants expressed and shared worries about how to manage and coordinate the often conflicting demands of public, private and professional lives.

Recognizing that a significant segment of our future leadership will emerge from the ranks of today's YELs, the Project led us to conclude that politics and governance would benefit from deliberate efforts to reach out to find potential new leaders as well as from efforts to build the capacity of young people already in office. Such efforts would focus on: (1) attracting greater numbers of young women and men to electoral politics; (2) recruiting a diverse candidate pool; and (3) devising programs that give young officeholders information, tools and support to enhance their individual and collective effectiveness as future public leaders.



INTRODUCTION

In the unpredictable world of politics, there may be a crystal ball in which to glimpse leaders of the future. Many of them are already in view, holding elective offices all across the country.

Of the 19 men who served as president of the United States during the twentieth century, 12 held their first elective office at age 35 or younger. The same is true for 57 of the 100 men and women serving in the U.S. Senate in 2003 as well as 215 of the 435 members of the U.S. House and 25 of the 50 governors holding office that same year (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Many officials who have won high-level offices were 35 or younger when they first held elective office.¹

U.S. Presidents during the 20th/21st centuries	12/19	(63%)
U.S. Senators serving in 2003	57/100	(57%)
U.S. Representatives serving in 2003	215/435	(49%)
Governors serving in 2003	25/50	(50%)

While holding elective office when one is barely old enough to have paid off school loans is not the only route to public leadership, our politics makes room for early entry and offers opportunities for rising within the system. It seems safe to predict that future presidents, senators and governors can be found among today's young elected officials. If this is the case, it is important to understand: *who they are and what forces have motivated and influenced them; what they think about people, politics and government; where they stand on public policy issues.*

Young politicians can be found throughout U.S. history, but neither researchers nor political analysts have documented their presence or sketched their profiles. Even as many young people today show little or no interest in electoral politics, a few have bucked this trend and chosen to run for public office. Despite all the obvious negatives of a career in public life – relatively low pay, often intense public scrutiny, little privacy, long hours, slow results – these young people are slipping through the widespread net of cynicism, plunging into politics, putting themselves and their ideas into the public arena.

The Young Elected Leaders Project locates and shines a beam on this heretofore unnoticed and unexamined segment of public leaders. We do so for several reasons – among them, to discover whether their

attraction to public leadership can teach us how to interest more young people in politics and government; to find among them a cadre whose interest in youth civic engagement can be marshaled to help expand the next generation's political participation; to identify tomorrow's leaders early in their careers in order to create special opportunities to help them meet the demands of their public lives and enhance their effectiveness and leadership potential.



THE YOUNG ELECTED LEADERS PROJECT

In 2002, the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University embarked on a pioneering national study of young officeholders. We identified and surveyed elected officials age 35 and under in three categories: federal (members of Congress); state (statewide elected officials and state legislators); and local (mayors and municipal council members from cities with populations of 30,000 or more). In May 2003, Eagleton convened *Political Generation Next: America's Young Elected Leaders*. This was the first national conference for young elected leaders, an occasion to explore issues raised in our research and discuss the challenges of public leadership facing the next generation. This report contains research findings from our census, survey and conference.² It concludes with a summary of what we found and our suggestions for fostering public leadership in the future.

In order to compare the young elected leaders (YELs) who responded to our survey with a sample of their peers who do not serve in elective office, we asked our respondents several questions that had also been asked as part of a large, multi-phase study of civic engagement in America (referred to in this report as "A Generational Portrait" or AGP). AGP was designed to document civic attitudes and behavior and the distinct ways in which each generation approaches politics and public life. We compared the YELs with AGP respondents aged 18 - 35.³ (See page 5 for a full description of the methodology used in each study.)

The Overall Population of Young Elected Leaders

Young people are seeking and winning elective office at every level and in almost every state, although their numbers are very small (Figure 2). In 2002, a total of 814 men and women age 35 and younger served among all officials in Congress, statewide elective executive positions, state legislatures, and municipalities with over 30,000 population. YELs held approximately 4.8 percent of all these positions combined,

constituting a minuscule proportion of public officials. They included six Members of Congress, two statewide elected officials, 321 state legislators, and 485 municipal officials (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Young People Elected in Each State



Figure 3. In 2002, Less than Five Percent of Elected Officials Were Age 35 or Younger

	Total	Total Number of Elected Officials	Percentage of Officials who are YELs
Members of Congress	6	535	1.1
Statewide Elected Officials	2	316	0.6
State Legislators	321	7,382	4.3
Municipal Officials	485	8,790	5.5
Total	814	17,023	4.8

Political Party Identification

Of the 700 YELs (86 percent of the total population) for whom party information was available, 352 are Democrats (50 percent), 271 are Republicans (39 percent), and 77 listed themselves as “Other” (11 percent, including Green and Progressive parties, nonpartisans, and independents).

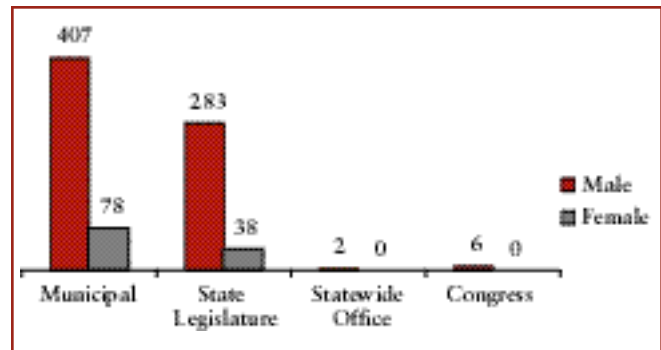
The partisan breakdown among YELs in Congress and state legislatures is similar to that of officials in these bodies overall. In 2002, among all 435 U.S. House members, 47 percent were Democrats and 52 percent Republicans, with one independent and 4 vacancies. Among the six YELs serving as U.S. Representatives at that time, half were Democrats and

half Republicans. In state legislatures across the country, Democrats held 51 percent of the seats, Republicans 47 percent, and “others” .3 percent, with the remainder of seats vacant. Among YELs in state legislatures, there were 160 Democrats (50 percent), 157 Republicans (49 percent), and 4 “others” (1 percent).⁴

Gender

The ratio of men to women among young people in office (Figure 4) is at once surprising and unsurprising –surprisingly imbalanced⁵ at the beginning of the 21st century when thirty years of change in opportunities for women might have been expected to result in a picture closer to gender parity among young leaders; yet also unsurprisingly reflective of the persisting imbalance between women and men in elective office despite incremental progress since the 1970s.

Figure 4. Most Young Elected Officials at Every Level of Government are Men



It is noteworthy that young women’s representation in elective office lags behind the representation of women in elective office overall. Women have long struggled to increase their numbers throughout the political system, with the slowest progress at the highest, most competitive levels. In 2002, women constituted 14 percent of the members of the U.S. Congress, 28 percent of statewide elective executives, and 23 percent of state legislators. At local levels, women were 21 percent of the mayors in cities with populations over 30,000.⁶ Yet in the next generation of political leaders, young women have not achieved even these minimal levels of representation. In 2002, all six young members of Congress were male.⁷ At the state level, no woman age 35 or younger held a statewide elective executive position, and women constituted only 12 percent of young state legislators. Among young mayors and council members in municipalities with populations of 30,000 and over, 16 percent were women (Figure 5).⁸

Figure 5. Young Women’s Representation Lags Behind that of Elected Women in General

	Women/ Officeholders Overall	Young Women/ Young Officeholder Overall
U.S. Congress	14%	0%
Statewide Elective Executive Offices	27%	0%
State Legislatures	23%	12%

Survey Respondents

The Eagleton survey was completed by 380 of the 814 YELs, yielding a 47 percent response rate. The respondents included two members of Congress (for a 33 percent response rate), 134 state legislators (42 percent response rate), and 244 municipal officials (50 percent response rate).

I did not think the commission was diverse or accessible. There were no women, no minorities, and no one was under 40....I felt powerless.

–Southern Democratic Councilmember

To create a context for this report, Figure 6 presents basic demographic information comparing young elected leaders (YELs) who responded to the Eagleton survey with the general population of young people surveyed in the civic engagement study (AGP). As a quick comparison of the two populations illustrates, early 21st century young elected leaders (like previous generations of officeholders) do not reflect America’s diversity.

I believe that young people should be more active in government at all levels. I also think a diverse legislature is a better legislature and as an Asian American and environmental engineer, I believe that I can share my experiences and perspective with my colleagues.

–Northeastern Republican Legislator

It is hard to be in politics and be young, but it’s even harder to be a young Latina. It seems you have to go the extra mile that most other elected officials don’t have to in order to be taken seriously.

–Western Democratic Mayor



Figure 6. Respondents to YEL and AGP Surveys: Demographic Characteristics

	YEL	AGP
Gender		
Men	85% (322)	47% (730)
Women	15% (58)	53% (822)
Age		
18-29	28%*	Respondents distributed roughly evenly by age
30-35	72%	
Family Income		
<\$50,000	23%	62%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	51%	31%
>\$100,000	22%	8%
Political Party Affiliation**		
Democrat	50%	29%
Republican	41%	28%
Independent	6%	27%
Other	3%	16%
No party	1%	–
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	81%	72%
Black/African American	8%	14%
Asian Pacific Islander	3%	3%
Mixed Race†	2%	–
Native American	.5%	0%
Other	5%	10%
Not Applicable/Don’t Know	1%	1%
Hispanic/Latino††	8%	14%
Religious Affiliation		
Protestant	51%	42%
Catholic	41%	56%
Jewish	5%	2%

* Youngest was 20

** Differences between these two populations with regard to party affiliation are expected, since candidates for elective office generally have to declare a party affiliation, and young people in general are likely to call themselves independents.

† This question was asked differently on the two surveys, resulting in not entirely comparable results. The AGP survey did not offer a “mixed race” option.

†† The question of Hispanic/Latino origin is reported separately from race because individuals can be Hispanic and also of another race/ethnicity.

THE CONFERENCE: POLITICAL GENERATION NEXT – AMERICA’S YOUNG ELECTED LEADERS

The Eagleton Institute convened YELs in May 2003 for a four-day conference, *Political Generation Next: America’s Young Elected Leaders*. We deliberately sought a demographic mix in order to bring a variety of perspectives to the table. Therefore, the 47 participants from 23 states and the District of Columbia were not a statistically representative sample of the total population of YELs. They included 27 municipal officials, 18 state legislators, 1 statewide elected executive and three Members of Congress; 27 were Democrats and 18 Republicans, with one independent and one “other.”

Much of the conference time was reserved for small-group discussions among the YELs, with three separate discussion periods focusing on different aspects of the YELs’ experiences in public life. The YELs were divided into four different groups for each session; group leaders facilitated the wide-ranging conversations, and rapporteurs observed and reported on each group’s discussion. The program also included a roundtable discussion with three of the under-35 members of Congress – Reps. Artur Davis (D-AL), Mike Ferguson (R-NJ) and Adam Putnam (R-FL). In addition, participants heard a report on preliminary findings from the survey of YELs. (A full conference agenda is appended to this report.)

Conference Participants

Is this generation different, or is it that young people and old people are different from each other and we’ll be the same as they are when we’re older?
– *New England Democrat*

As a group, the young elected leaders who convened at the Eagleton conference were smart, energetic, and friendly. Coming from all corners of the country, different parties, and varied ideological orientations, they shared a sophisticated understanding of American democracy and an interest in improving it.

In comparing notes, the organizers of *Political Generation Next* found that the conference had left them with a number of common observations. The consensus was that much of what YELs described about their experiences as officeholders was more characteristic of their tenure in office than of their age. One rapporteur endorsed this observation, pointing to a comment from a city councilwoman who had noted, “What we bring is newness and freshness, not necessarily youth.” As political practitioners, they sounded and acted like newly elected officials rather

than distinctively young elected officials. “What jumped out to me,” commented a discussion group leader, “was that they were new to elected office—more impatient with the system, more anxious to resolve problems, frustrated with the pace of change.” A rapporteur cited a comment from one city council member that reinforced this impression: “I’ve formed a bond with the oldest member of our council. We’re both new, and we both want to make changes. The longer people serve, the more they want to protect City Hall.”

Another discussion leader’s comment also resonated with the organizers: “I was expecting them to be different, but they seemed no different from other elected officials.” Most obviously, as their actions affirm, the young elected leaders resemble public leaders across the country in their belief in the electoral system and its political processes.

Conference organizers also agreed that confidence stood out as one striking characteristics of YELs that is frequently associated with elected officials. They exhibited a sense of personal efficacy, a “can do” attitude rooted in the belief that they have what it takes to get things done. When confronted with something unfamiliar, their attitude is, “I can figure it out.” Individualistic in their orientation, they count on themselves first and foremost, calling on self-discipline and strategic thinking before relying on parties and other power structures.

Notwithstanding their shared characteristics, the challenges and benefits YELs experience differ as widely as their personal and political circumstances. The challenges of being young and in public office vary with gender; marital, parental and professional status; and level of office. Even among state legislators, the experiences of those in states that treat being a legislator as a full-time job, with a full-time salary, tend to be quite different from those in states where the legislature meets only a few months a year and pays only a nominal salary. The issue of age itself can be deceptive. Although YELs by definition are age 35 or younger, those officials in their 30s often find themselves in very different situations personally and professionally than the 22-year-old officials a half-generation away.

THE YOUNG ELECTED LEADERS (YELS)

Background

Family Background and Political Socialization

Theorists tell us that when people are socialized to value political participation, they are more likely to engage in politics. Parents are the assumed agents of political socialization.

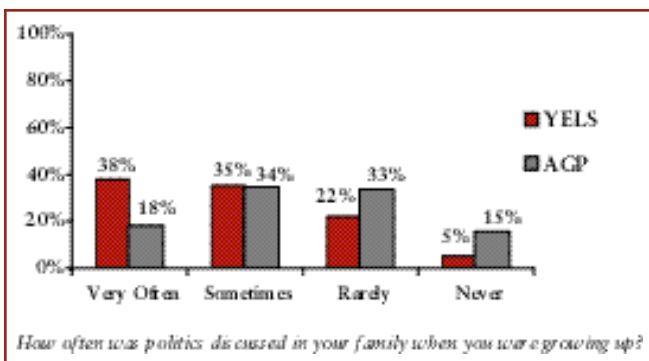
“I was the only child of parents who watched the news and discussed politics,” explained one YEL when asked what influenced him to enter politics. A midwestern state legislator who grew up “around politics all the time” thought “it was cool to shake people’s hands and get a lot of attention. Later I found out that public service was actually involved!”

For most of the YELs whose parents were interested or involved in politics, participation was more likely to be informal or community-based rather than elected at a state or municipal level. “My mom was a PTA president who taught us to put up or shut up,” laughed one. Another grew up in an activist family, with a mother who worked for a labor union and a father engaged in various citizen action projects.

Some YELs had parents who were professionally connected to politics. Because the mother of one council member worked in city hall, he got to know the people and learned his way around city government when he visited her. Having grown up in a household where politics was dinner-table talk, a state legislator whose mother was a lobbyist said that she always knew she wanted to be in office.

YELs responding to the survey grew up in homes where politics might well have been a dinner-table topic of conversation. When asked, “How often was politics discussed in your family when you were growing up?” 38 percent of YELs said “very often” compared with only 18 percent of young people in general.⁹ (Figure 7)

Figure 7. Politics was discussed more often in the homes of YELs than in the homes of AGP respondents.



YELs’ families not only talk about politics—they engage in politics. Relatives of a substantial number of YELs (29 percent) have served in elected or appointed office at some time. Of those who said a family member had held office, a majority cited their fathers (51 percent). Of all YELs with family members who have held office, eight percent were immediately preceded in their current offices by a relative.

Figure 8. Who among your relatives has held office?¹⁰

Father	51%
Relative other than those listed here	25%
Uncle	19%
Mother	17%
Cousin	7%
Brother/sister	6%
Aunt	2%
Husband	.9%
Wife	.9%

While we have no comparable data about the general public to place this finding in context, it seems safe to say that politics runs in families. Children of political families inherit both the inclination to pursue politics and also some concrete assets. Obvious advantages of having a relative in office might include local name recognition, a ready-made political Rolodex and readily available contacts and networks. If merely by example or proximity, public officials influence younger generations in their families to follow in their footsteps.

My family has historically been in politics. My father was state house majority leader, chairman of the state highway commission, and ran for Congress. My mother held my current position prior to my being elected.

—Midwestern Republican Councilmember

But there was much variation among the YELs. While some described their parents as interested or even intensely involved in politics, others said their parents were uninterested in politics, did not follow the news, and in some cases did not even vote. One councilman admitted, “My mother started voting when I ran [for office].”

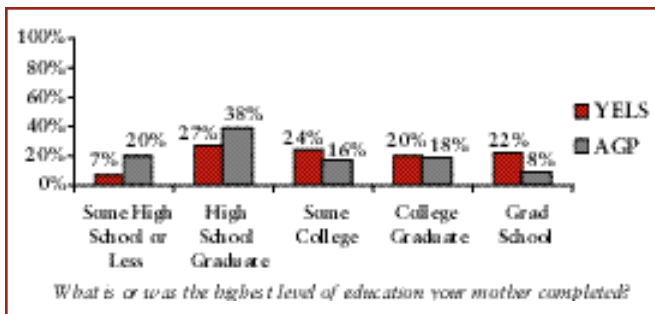
Nonetheless, many who said their parents were uninterested in politics believed that parental attitudes were still important. Several YELs pointed to their parents' "can-do" attitudes and work ethics as influential in their socialization.

My father inspired me to get involved in politics. He always taught me that it is important to give something of yourself back to your community and that being elected to serve in office is a privilege and quite honorable.

—Mid-Atlantic Democratic Councilmember

In general, our survey showed that YELs come from well educated families far more often than AGP respondents.¹¹ For example, 22 percent of the young elected leaders report that their mothers went to graduate school, compared with 8 percent of the AGP respondents (Figure 9).

Figure 9. YELs' mothers are more highly educated than the mothers of AGP respondents.

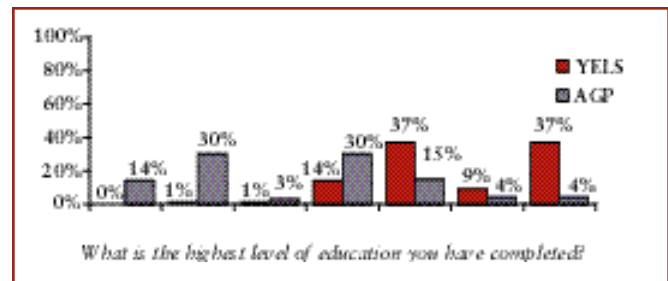


Education

YELs are a highly educated group of young citizens. Almost all survey respondents – 97 percent – attended college, with 62 percent attending public undergraduate institutions and 38 percent private. The majority of respondents had completed college, with substantial numbers continuing their education beyond the undergraduate level. In contrast, less than half of AGP respondents reported having completed at least some college (Figure 10).



Figure 10. YELs are more highly educated than AGP respondents.



As undergraduates, YELs chose majors across the spectrum of academic offerings. While they named more than two dozen fields, a group of five subject areas – political science, business, history, communications and economics—constituted almost three-quarters of YELs' majors. The most popular major was political science/government; a little more than a third (36 percent) of YELs either majored in that field or had a double major that included it. Business-related fields – including accounting, marketing, finance, and management – ranked second in popularity, named by 19 percent of YELs. While a large number of YELs chose majors one might expect of people interested in politics and public affairs, the range of their responses also demonstrates that there is no single educational path to politics. Although quite likely to be college educated, young elected officials have come to political life from a variety of fields of study.

Activities and Interests

Predictably, in addition to being highly educated, YELs tend to be active citizens. Similar to U.S. political elites of any age, young political officials are joiners and doers.

I have been interested in elected office since I was young. Student government was very important in getting me interested.

—Midwestern Republican Councilmember

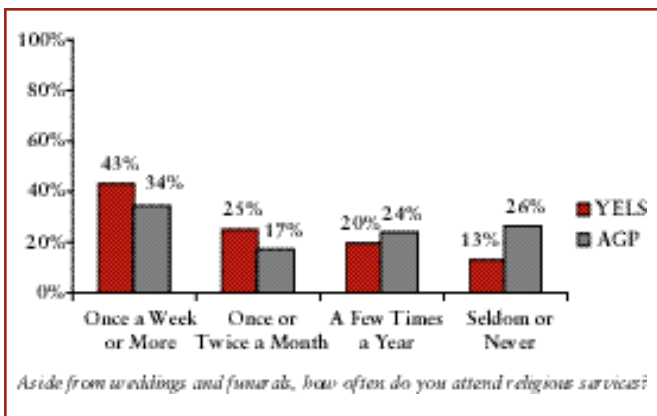
As high school students, survey respondents were involved in many extracurricular activities, whether within or outside school. Ninety-six percent said they participated in organized activities, and 56 percent of those said they had participated in five or more. Organized sports, student council or student government, community service, and religious youth groups were most frequently mentioned. Among those YELs who took part in community service, 90 percent said it was voluntary and 7 percent said it was required, with the remainder responding "don't know/don't recall." Among those whose schools had student gov-

ernments, 45 percent had served in that government, while 39 percent were not involved in any way. Most of the remainder had participated in other ways, such as running for a student government office or working on a school campaign.¹²

While high school activities attracted many AGP respondents, YELs outpaced them as joiners. On this measure, the gap (18 points) between YELs and AGP respondents is large, with 96 percent of YELs and 78 percent of AGP respondents saying they were involved in organized activities during high school.

In college, where students' schedules might be fuller, most YELs continued to be active, with 82 percent participating in at least one activity. A quarter of the YELs reported participating in three or more activities while in college. The most frequently mentioned type of activity was community or volunteer work (56 percent) followed by student government (38 percent) and organized sports (30 percent).¹³

Figure 11. YELs attend religious services more frequently than do AGP respondents.



Perhaps surprisingly, only a minority of YELs participated in college student government. Notably, the level of participation was far higher among male YELs (42 percent) than among female YELs (19 percent). While involvement in student government is often thought of as a precursor to post-college political involvement and appears to be so for almost half of male YELs, this finding suggests that women take a different path. Participation in student government often presents opportunities to gain experience in public speaking and debate, articulate views on controversial issues, lobby for support, and campaign for votes. Female YELs appear to have bypassed this type of exposure and informal “training” available outside the classroom.

YELs attend religious services more frequently than AGP respondents (Figure 11). This divergence may reflect the well known tendency of elected officials to

participate in a variety of community organizations and activities and/or their perceptions about what voters expect of public leaders.

Personal Life/Professional Life

The topic of personal and professional stresses faced in elective office was raised by many survey respondents, and was also perhaps the most pervasive throughout the conference discussions. Conflicts between public life and private life face politicians of all ages, but YELs at the conference argued persuasively that the effects on young people are more intense. These effects differentiated YELs from other young people even more than age separated YELs from older colleagues. The issue of conflicts among public life, careers and private life crossed gender lines.

Marital, Parental and Occupational Status

Two-thirds of YELs who responded to the survey either are married (62 percent) or say they are “living as married/living with someone” (5 percent). Twenty-nine percent have never married. There is no appreciable difference in marital status (i.e. married/living as married) between male YELs (68 percent) and female YELs (63 percent). Almost half of YELs (43 percent) are parents who, whether male or female, confront the common challenge of managing political, professional and domestic responsibilities. While the difference is not statistically significant, among YELs a slightly higher percentage of women have children (48 percent of women, 42 percent of men).¹⁴

A large majority of YELs who responded to the survey (86 percent) are currently employed in addition to holding office. This is not surprising since most state and local elected offices are part-time positions. Of the YELs who are employed, 81 percent work full-time and 19 percent part-time. Significant gender differences are apparent – 90 percent of the men, but 68 percent of the women, say they are employed in addition to holding office. Among those who are employed, 84 percent of the men and 54 percent of the women work full-time; 16 percent of the men and 46 percent of the women work part-time outside of their elective offices. These familiar gender differences are likely accounted for by women’s greater responsibilities in domestic life.

My job as an attorney and my elected office take a lot of time. What gets sacrificed first is personal life.

—Midwestern Republican Councilmember

The single most commonly mentioned primary occupation is attorney, listed by 20 percent of all respondents, with no evident gender gap. Other occupations receiving a considerable number of mentions were self-employed/business owner/entrepreneur (13 percent), manager/administrator (10 percent), government employee/civil servant (8 percent), and marketing/accounting/finance/investment (6 percent). No other single occupation was named by more than 4 percent of respondents.

Confronting the Challenges

Many YELs, whether single or raising young families, find that the combination of public office and private life presents distinctive challenges. Family was a concern for the married officeholders, while dating concerns and time for friends affected the single people. Many voiced the universal lament of elected officials of all ages—the difficulties of having any sort of private life, even to visit the grocery store uninterrupted. One highly visible official expressed the boundary dilemma this way: “The whole world is your office – you can’t go out without dressing up.” A councilman added, “You can’t shoot pool in the local pub.” Demurring, a legislator said: “I don’t mind intrusion. Constituents like to see us as regular people who shop at the same stores as they do.”

The toughest part about being a public official is balancing time. It seems there are an unlimited number of night and weekend meetings, dinners and other events....When push comes to shove, I view my primary job as an elected official as twofold—providing responsive constituent service, and being an effective legislator....I would like to attend more ceremonial events because they provide opportunities to keep my finger on the pulse of what’s going on. However, I simply can’t be two places at once, and I also need to take time at home with my wife, family and friends.

—Mid-Atlantic Democratic Councilmember

Married with Children: YELs with young families—both men and women—mentioned that time away from their children posed the same problems encountered by many busy professionals. According to one municipal official, council nights are especially

hard because he can’t tuck his 4-year-old into bed. A legislator joked about the child whose first words were “meeting” and “airplane.” Female legislators with young families noted that if their districts had not been near the capital, they could not have run for office. Overnight commutes were not an acceptable option.

The balance between family, career and public service is a constant juggling act. Any future decision not to maintain involvement would be based on a desire to spend more evenings with my wife and two small children.

—New England Democratic Councilmember

Whether or not they had children or other major family responsibilities, YELs recognized that political life and family life were next to impossible to mesh. A single professional woman who reported experiencing more than enough stress and guilt in accommodating her legal career and her city council office exclaimed, “I can’t imagine how anyone with a family can do it!”

I have tried to bring a new voice for young working families and neighborhoods to the table. It is a difficult task to juggle a growing family, career and life as an elected official. This is something that many of my colleagues and my predecessors do not have in common with me. Most have families with no children or grown children in the house, and some are even retired. It is important to maintain a voice that is experiencing the challenges of raising a young family today.

—Western Democratic Councilmember

She noted that a female colleague with four children is leaving because she says it cannot be done, and that her male colleagues all have wives who are taking care of the children. One man, who described his wife as someone who is “as political as you can get,” said she “won’t do it [i.e. run for office herself] now because of our child, but will do it later.” A male council member reported “big problems” and “much stress” in making the various parts of his life work together. He

lamented, “my wife is raising our daughter.” Another man in the same discussion responded that he, “feels guilty about his family.” A councilwoman revealed, “I’m not sure whether I’ll run again. I love politics, but I’d like to have a family someday and have control over my own life.”

Two-Career Couples: YELs come from a generation where it is common and almost expected that couples will have two careers. When one career is in politics, conflicts frequently arise. For legislators, for example, serving usually involves a commute to the capital and often overnight stays. Being an elected official then means living away from one’s family. If a spouse also has a career, he or she is faced with burdens similar to those of a single parent.

Young, Elected, and Dating: Single YELs said they had a hard time adjusting to the lack of privacy involved in holding elective office, especially when dating. Several participants described dates at restaurants interrupted by constituents bent on discussing legislative problems; others were annoyed by gossiping older colleagues fascinated with the personal lives of the younger generation.

Conflicts of interest regarding whom an elected official can date were also frequently cited as special problems. People of the same age whom a YEL might encounter in politics and government are likely to be interns, support staff, or lobbyists—all questionable as dating partners for elected officials.

Two Roles – Political and Professional: The young officials at the conference were concerned about conflict, or potential conflict, between elective office and their jobs, since most of their elective offices are paid as part-time positions, and yet take up so much time that it is sometimes difficult to hold a traditional job or advance successfully in a profession. The YELs seemed to agree that choosing to run for public office was a sacrifice for their careers and their finances. Politicians of any age face problems balancing the workday with the political day and avoiding conflicts of interest in the clients they accept or the contracts they take. For YELs, the challenges may be intensified because they are just starting out in their careers.

Among YELs in their late 20s and early 30s who had launched careers, some mentioned having to refuse clients or contracts because of potential conflicts of interest. Others had been passed over for promotion because they couldn’t put in as many hours as their non-elected colleagues. Speaking with intensity, one city councilwoman drew the dilemma starkly: “I’m an attorney. I’m feeling guilty all the time. The burn-out is incredible. I could be out of the house every night at four meetings. And when I don’t make a meeting because I have to finish a brief, I feel guilty. Then peo-

ple say, ‘we haven’t seen you around.’ Sometimes I worry that partners in my firm see me on the phone and wonder, ‘Is she doing legal work or constituent work?’” A state legislator pointed to the inevitable uncertainties and costs of combining elective office with professional life: “You don’t know if you’ll keep being elected; meanwhile, your professional colleagues are focusing on building their client base and moving forward. When you come back after a legislative session, or you lose a race, you can’t catch up in a law practice or other career. On top of that, as a state legislator, you make little or no money.”

It is very difficult to be a young elected official today, particularly at the city council level. So much time is now needed to work at full-time paying positions that younger generations of people are finding it harder to serve. That is why, on a local level, city councils are predominantly occupied by retired or financially secure individuals.

–Western Republican Councilmember



For officials in their 20s, who have little professional experience before winning office, these issues are especially daunting. “I can’t start a career until I’m done,” said one legislator in his early 20s. “I could be in my 40s before I start my career.” Another disclosed: “Because I was in the legislature, I didn’t get a graduate degree.”

Some elected officials are fortunate in finding it possible to fit together the professional and political pieces of their lives. A councilman who commutes some distance to work noted that mid-day meetings in his district require him to take half days off from work. While grateful that his employer is supportive and understands the value of his officeholding, he concedes that he could have advanced farther in his professional career were he not in elected office.

Asked what surprised them when they entered office, a number of YELs echoed this statement: “I had no idea how much time would be involved.” Put another way by one legislator, “It’s hard to schedule private time. The biggest adjustment is being scheduled all day and evening.”

One Midwestern lawmaker had not realized how many requests would come to serve on volunteer boards. Although she supported their causes, board membership just added to her workload.

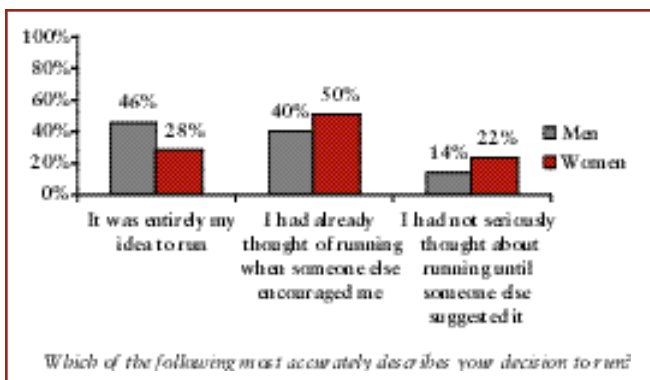
Political Life

Who or What Made YELs Run?

Relatively few YELs got the idea of running for office from someone else. Only 15 percent reported they “had not seriously thought about running until someone else suggested it.” The overwhelming majority of these young political people said they were entirely or largely self-motivated in their decisions to seek elective office. Forty-three percent said, “it was entirely my idea to run,” while 42 percent said, “I had already thought of running when someone else encouraged me to run.”

However, when it comes to the impetus to run, a striking gender contrast emerges. Young women more frequently require prodding than their male counterparts. Only 28 percent of the women, compared with 46 percent of the men, said “It was entirely my idea to run” (Figure 12). The difference between women and men as political self-starters is consistent with earlier research findings about candidates for state legislatures and warrants attention from those concerned with progress for young women in politics.¹⁵

Figure 12. Young women require more encouragement to run for office than young men.



When YELs were asked who or what inspired them to seek political office, almost half (48 percent) chose issues,¹⁶ while 54 percent cited specific people.¹⁷

Issues: Instead of being motivated by a general desire to be involved in politics, some YELs were likely to have run initially to deal with some very specific issue or problem. Consistent with the profile of YELs as joiners and doers, the issues they cited as motivating them reflected their active commitment to their communities. The “issues” mentioned by survey respondents and conference participants most frequently fell into one of three categories: specific policies YELs wanted to promote; a desire for good government; a desire to be of service.

One man at the conference who worked as a planner wanted to improve the municipal planning process. Several people pursued office to help enhance their local neighborhoods and playgrounds. A firefighter sought better representation for municipal employees.

A councilwoman, whose background included a history of social activism but not partisan politics, was propelled into office through a highly visible community organizing effort. A co-worker reported that she was “about to have a heart attack” because the city planned to bulldoze her home in a trailer park it had designated as a blighted community: “I got people together, and we fought for a year. When the tide began turning, the residents couldn’t believe what they saw us achieving. A progressive minority on the city council saw what I was doing and invited me to run. I wouldn’t have done it otherwise.”

I was inspired to continue upholding the conservative values of the district I represent. I had and still have a desire to be in touch with those in my House district and to express their desires and values in my state government policies.

—Southern Republican Legislator

I have always been interested in politics. I wanted to run so that I could become more involved and have a voice on issues in government. In particular, environmental issues are of great concern to me.

— New England Democratic Legislator

During the 80s I knew I was a social conservative. I knew that I was pro-life and pro-family. As I discovered more about politics and the economy, I learned that I was also a fiscal conservative, especially with respect to tax policy.

— Southern Republican Legislator

It was actually more than one issue. I grew up in the district that I represent and we had a lot of problems from crime, drugs, education and economic development. I believed I could make a difference.

— Southern Democratic Councilmember

It was not as much about being inspired by [a certain person] as much as it was that I just have a love for changing negative circumstances into positives one for people. The idea that this opportunity would allow me to help the masses oppose to a few really attracted me.

— Southern Independent Mayor Pro-Tem

It was more than a single issue. It was more a desire to be involved in the city that my family has called home for over 70 years and to make sure it stayed a great place to grow up for my two children and the children of our town.

– Western Republican Councilmember

People: Seeking office can be prompted by both positive and negative influences. Many YELs at the conference credited mentors or other individuals with encouraging them to run for office. A few reacted against people who contended that they could not run or would not be successful representatives. These young officials mentioned being motivated to prove the naysayers wrong.

Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of YELs who completed the survey have role models – people whom they would like to emulate. Personal acquaintances involved in politics—friends, bosses, colleagues or mentors—are the most commonly cited role models (24 percent). Other categories YELs mention frequently include: elected or appointed officials they do not know personally (19 percent); historical figures (13 percent); their fathers (12 percent); contemporary U.S. presidents, vice presidents, or cabinet members (11 percent).

The “people” most often named by survey respondents as having inspired them were friends or mentors, particularly those in politics, as well as elected or appointed officials who were not necessarily personal acquaintances. Family members were also mentioned frequently – in many cases family members who had been active in politics.

YELs at the conference named Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton as especially influential in their political development and aspirations. For many of them, Ronald Reagan was the president of their childhoods. One conference participant with high regard for Bill Clinton especially admired his ability to focus and to articulate a message. While both presidents evoked strong feelings ranging from admiration to disdain, what they had in common, one YEL suggested, was their optimism. That optimism inspired and attracted young people.

When I was in first grade, Ronald Reagan was elected President. I was so interested and inspired by him that I decided then I wanted to be in politics.

–Midwestern Republican Councilmember

My father inspired me at a very early age. He was always very involved in whatever community we lived in. His love for me and others made such an impression on me, it just became natural for me to do the same.

– Southern Democratic Councilmember

A family friend who was an elected official... supported me and gave me an opportunity to learn about the issues that would then come to be my inspiration.

– Midwestern Democratic Councilmember

My mother was my inspiration for getting into politics. At a young age, my parents were divorced and my father left the state and became a deadbeat dad, leaving my mother to raise two young children....I guess what I learned from my mother was that you should always be true to your responsibilities and never stop trying to make the world a better place, no matter how impossible the challenge may seem.

– New England Republican Councilmember

I had thought about being the President of the U.S. since I was six years old...and the feelings of running for political office resurfaced at the suggestion of my father-in-law, a former state representative. His wisdom and intellect have always been inspiring.

–New England Democratic Legislator

Political Opportunities: The majority of YELs participating in the discussions were elected during their first run for office, perhaps unsurprising given the youth of conference participants. Many achieved office by taking advantage of political opportunities, broadly construed –for example, an incumbent stepping down, the introduction of term limits, or the creation of a redistricted seat. A legislator said that she ran earlier than she had originally planned because an opportunity arose when a seat opened: “I had learned from writing a paper about women in politics that the time to run was when there was an open seat.”



Young and Running

My mom threatens to vote against me all the time if I don't mow the lawn.

– Western State Legislator

We heard again and again about the double-edged nature of being young at election-time. Opponents often made a campaign issue out of youth, attempting to equate youth with ignorance and inexperience. But the YELs said in their cases they were able to overcome these criticisms by focusing instead on youth as embodying freshness and change. Others said they simply tried to ignore the issue entirely.

I strategically ignored the youth factor, hoping it would quickly go away, because in my campaign youth [was seen as] inexperience.

– Mid-Atlantic Council Member

Many YELs commented on a positive connection between young politicians and senior citizens.

As one legislator put it, “Old people love young people.” Strongly agreeing, a municipal official added: “They love young people and they vote.” YELs pointed to senior citizens in their districts as among their strongest supporters. A few suggested this might be because while their young constituents tend not to vote, and the middle-aged are threatened by their youth, the senior citizens “think we’re cute.”

Gender became an important factor during elections, and seemed to interact negatively with youth. A married YEL said she was portrayed during the election as about to have children (thereby neglecting her constituents) and another said she was asked, “Who is going to watch the baby?” Male YELs did not mention facing such questions about their child rearing. The female YELs who were single said they faced gossip, even slanderous comments, about their sexual habits. Male candidates did not mention this as a problem for them.

Governing

I try to play down the age thing. I never asked to be the youngest state representative, I just asked to be a representative.

– Midwestern State Legislator

The young leaders expressed surprise about the process of government itself. One commented, “I had to learn to be in the minority, and to recognize the need to take my name off bills to get things passed.” Another admitted expecting elected officials to work together more and share priorities. Instead, he saw many people just doing their own thing.

Some feared being pigeon-holed if they worked on “youth” issues such as the drinking age or child care. Others viewed their youth as an opportunity and a niche within the broader political system. Among the issues YELs cited as being brought to them because of their youth were tuition indebtedness, drug and alcohol - related matters such as legalizing marijuana, reducing the drinking age, extending bar hours and Sunday sales, as well as such timely subjects such as the environment and information technology.

A number of YELs prided themselves on introducing changing technologies to their governing bodies. A councilman took pride in bringing the first laptops, fax machines, and pagers to his city hall: “The good old boys there didn’t have these things.” One municipal official discovered when she first took office that council members received thick packets of paper documents each week, delivered to their homes by police officers on overtime. After pressing the issue for a year, she convinced her colleagues to purchase laptop computers for the town and post the materials online, trimming \$70,000 from the annual budget.

A number of YELs were surprised by the slow pace of change, observing that in the non-profit and business worlds things can get done faster. They voiced the opinion that older colleagues often choose to study a problem rather than move forward to solve it. Preferring not to look down the pike to anticipate what’s coming, they take the attitude, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” YELs see themselves as results oriented. As one put it, “We want to act to make an impact while we’re here.”

Other YELs saw the slow pace as inherent in the democratic process. As one state legislator insisted, “It’s the way the system was created – blame James Madison. The process is designed to kill ideas; it slows down both bad and good ideas.”

Relationships with Colleagues in Office

YELs emphasized the importance of establishing credibility as officeholders as quickly as possible, sometimes a daunting task because of their youth.

You have to work two, three, four times harder to get legislation passed.

– Southern State Legislator

Every new member has a credibility curve, and it seems that the younger you are, the steeper it is.

– Southwestern State Legislator

One thing that always surprised me is how hard I had to work to convince people of something that was fairly obvious, just because of my age.

– Southern State Legislator



In fact, YELs saw themselves as being well prepared and knowledgeable, perhaps even better prepared and more knowledgeable than their colleagues. Still, they recognized the need for advice and support. One YEL, who said he “could use a mentor to guide” him, considered the biggest challenge to be, “figuring out where the person you’re talking with is coming from.”

Over the course of the discussions, many YELs identified a number of common problems with older colleagues. The list of complaints included:

- Their distinctive needs
- Excessive partisanship
- Insufficient respect for young people
- Tendency to claim credit where not appropriate
- Propensity to work individually rather than as a team
- Resistance to change.

Colleagues in office – especially in the middle-aged generation just ahead – were often seen as being jealous, hostile, and fearful toward the younger generation. One Midwestern legislator captured the surprise shared by YELs who had discovered, “the level of backstabbing that exists within [the]...political party, [coming from]...supposed teammates and allies.” He lamented, “the people who are most threatened are your party colleagues.”

Some young men and women felt mis-perceived by their colleagues, but for different reasons. Female YELs encountered dual prejudices from their older colleagues – they were doubted and dismissed both because of their youth and because they were women in “a man’s world.” Male YELs said it was often wrongly assumed that they were consumed by ambition, looking toward seeking statewide or national office rather than attending to their current offices.

YELs believed their youth attracts special media attention, sometimes engendering hostility from senior colleagues. As one YEL observed, “the media are always looking for a hook,” and youth provides that, but perhaps at a cost to collegial harmony.

Relationships with Constituents

Once elected, some young officeholders recognize that their age might be a matter of concern to some constituents and think about how to reassure them. One Midwestern councilman, for example, believed that fear of young people could be overcome and trust built, “when you’re seen as someone who attends meetings and looks out for constituents.” A survey respondent reported, “I am always challenged because

of my age, and I find myself having to prove myself by working harder, faster and smarter.” Another cautioned, “When people agree with you, you’re right. When they disagree with you, you’re young.”

Ambition – Staying or Leaving?

Keeping in mind that half of the nation’s current top officials first entered elective office at age 35 or younger, we can expect a substantial number of today’s YELs to remain in office and move up. Among survey respondents, an overwhelming 86 percent aspire to offices beyond their current positions.

Asked to name the highest elective or appointive office they hope to achieve, 58 percent picked a federal elective position– 14 percent want to be president; 2 percent vice president; 24 percent U.S. Senator; and 18 percent U.S. Representative. Eighteen percent aspire to the top executive positions in their states or cities–13 percent aim to become governors, and 5 percent mayors. Other offices were mentioned less frequently.

Relatively few YELs are ready to climb directly onto the federal rung of the elective ladder. Only 2 percent name U.S. Senate and 13 percent U.S. House as their desired next step. Two percent see themselves as governors next, and another 23 percent as mayors. For more than a third of YELs, a seat in the state legislature is the immediate goal, with 18 percent aiming for the state senate and 17 percent for the state house or assembly. Other offices received substantially fewer mentions. Since no significant gender differences appeared in responses to this question, political women and men appear to be equally ambitious once in office.

In response to the question of whether they plan to run again, conference participants by and large expected to stay in politics despite the well known drawbacks. A sample of their responses illustrates both their ambition and their realistic assessment of the prospects:

- “People want me to run again, but the pace is brutal. I don’t know if I will.”
- “Yes, I’ll stay. It’s a part of me now. I want to help my state, even hold statewide office. I don’t have visions of DC.”
- “I don’t know. I would like to be outside for a while and then see.”
- “There is a problem of needing personal wealth to get through the process. I will face a moment of choice between going to Washington to make lots more money as a lobbyist versus staying in public service.”



- “I would like to stay and be in state office.”
- “I used to think I couldn’t do without it. Now I think I could walk away.”
- “I plan to run for mayor, state representative, congressman, and governor.”
- “Yes, I’ll stay in politics. Maybe I’ll run for Congress, although it’s hard because my state is Republican and I’m a Democrat.”
- “I might go for mayor. And I’d like to support other good people.”
- “I don’t want it to go to my head. Politics is addictive and can go to your head. I’ve seen too many people who don’t know how to be anyone else. They get lost.”

Outlook: Attitudes and Opinions

YELs – Views About Public Policy Issues

The public policy attitudes of young elected officials generally fall along conventional partisan lines. To the extent that they differ from traditional party preferences on some issues, they reflect the conservative tilt of their time. Like elected officials in general, young officeholders also differ by gender on some public policy matters.

In response to questions about two contentious domestic policy issues, YELs seem more conservative than might be expected for members of their generation. On race-based preferential school admissions and hiring, Republican opposition is all but unanimous and Democrats as a group are markedly ambivalent (41 percent in favor, 37 percent opposed, with 22 percent describing themselves as neither in favor nor opposed) (Figure 13). Asked about a law largely banning the possession of handguns, Republicans voice almost total opposition and are joined in that stance by a majority of Democrats, although a sizeable partisan gap remains, with one-third of Democrats favoring such a ban (Figure 14).

Figure 13. Republican YELs oppose affirmative action, while their Democratic colleagues are more divided on this issue.

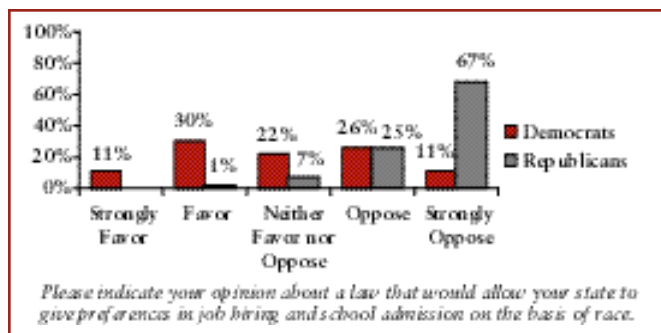
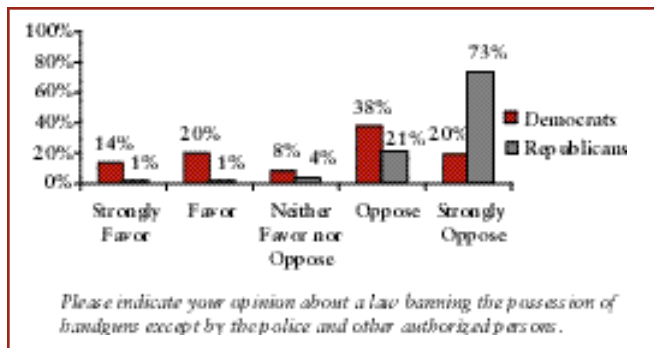


Figure 14. Almost all Republican YELs and a majority of the Democrats oppose a handgun ban.



Traditional partisan differences are evident among young officeholders on the issues of school vouchers and hate crimes legislation. Asked a question about whether they favor providing parents with government-funded school vouchers for use in schools of their choice, both public and private (including religious), young elected officials present a mirror image along opposing party lines—75 percent of Republicans favor vouchers and 14 percent oppose them; 77 percent of Democrats oppose vouchers and 14 percent favor them (Figure 15). On the issue of stiffer penalties for hate crimes legislation, young elected Republicans are far more divided (43 percent favoring harsher penalties and 44 percent opposed), while a large majority of young elected Democrats (85 percent) favor such a law (Figure 16).

Figure 15. Partisan differences among YELs are evident on the issue of school vouchers.

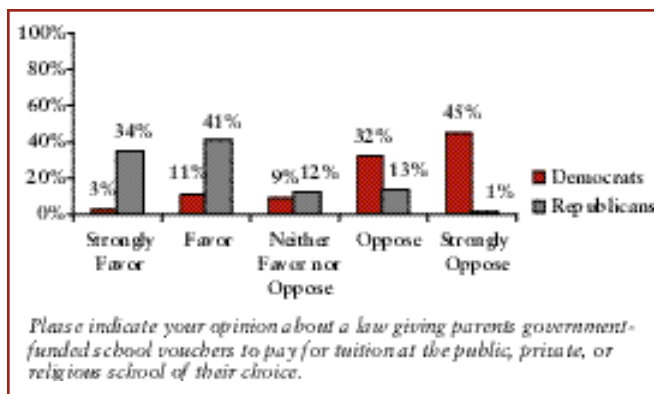
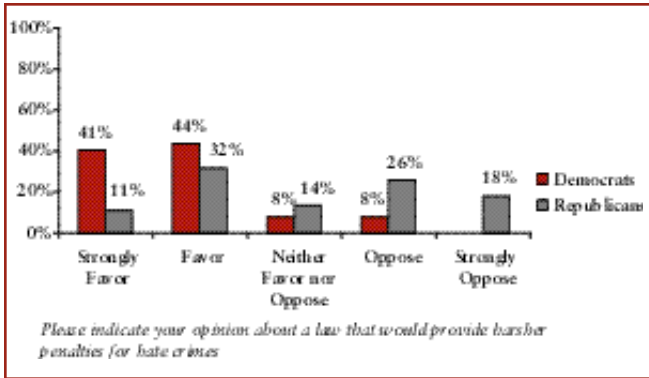


Figure 16. Young Democrats favor a law requiring harsher punishment for hate crimes, while young Republicans are more evenly divided.



On two issues, the divide among young officeholders falls along gender lines. While young elected women and men both oppose overturning Roe versus Wade, they differ by twenty points on this issue. Asked whether the Supreme Court should reverse its decision making abortion legal during the first three months of pregnancy, 76 percent of women and 56 percent of men said no (Figure 17). Young male and female officeholders also differ about a ban on handgun possession; the men oppose such a ban, while the women are about evenly divided between those who favor and those who oppose it (Figure 18).

Figure 17. Both male and female YELs oppose overturning Roe v. Wade, but women are more opposed.

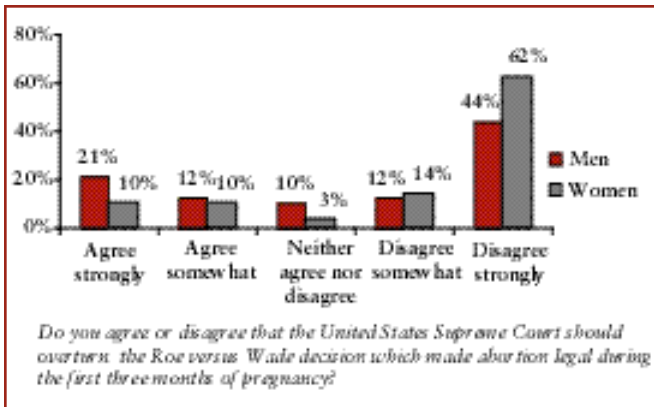
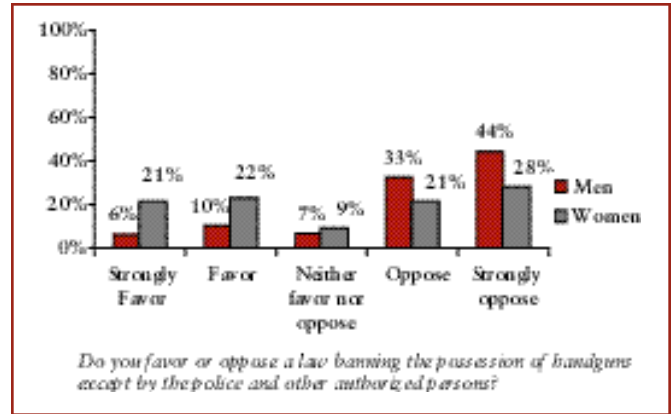


Figure 18. Male YELs oppose a ban on handgun possession, while female YELs are more evenly divided on this issue.



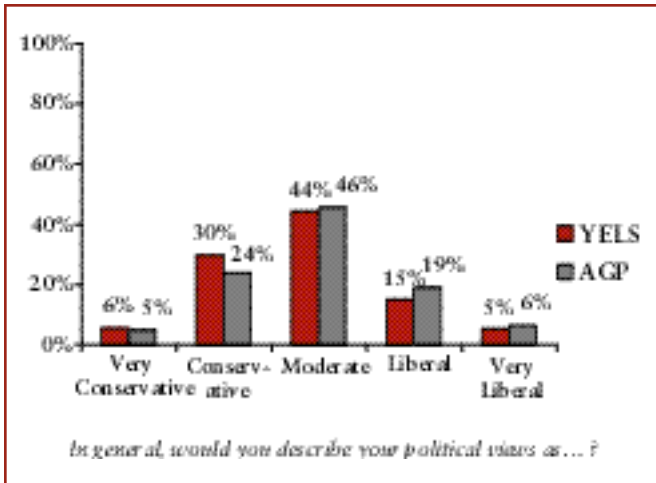
Comparing YELs with the General Public: On two issues available data allow comparison between YELs and the general public. With regard to Roe versus Wade, the views of YELs and the general public are in alignment, with about three-fifths of each group opposed to overturning the Supreme Court decision on abortion. However there is a big difference between YELs and the general public on the issue of civil unions for gay and lesbian couples. Here a small majority of the general public (53 percent) oppose legalization of civil unions, while only 38 percent of YELs take this position.¹⁸ While we lack the data to prove generational differences on this question, future research may uncover such a gap.

YELs and Young People in General – Views About People, Politics and Government

Almost half of both YELs and young people in general choose the label “moderate,” matching the most common preference of U.S. voters. However, while AGP respondents are about evenly divided between those who call themselves either “very conservative” or “conservative,” (29 percent) and those who call themselves “very liberal” or “liberal” (25 percent), the YELs tilt somewhat more conservative, with 36 percent picking either “very conservative” or “conservative” and 20 percent saying they are “liberal” or “very liberal.”(Figure 19).

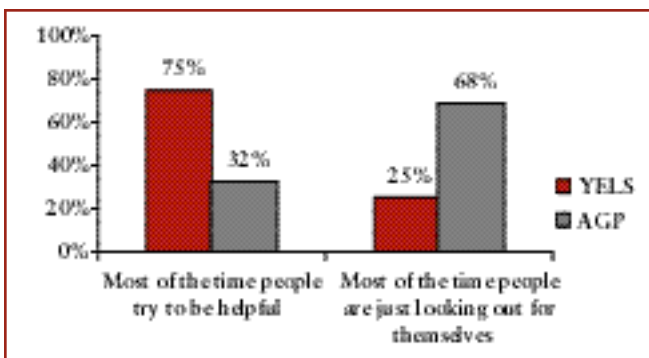


Figure 19. YELs and AGP respondents tend to call themselves moderates.



YELs are more trusting of people’s motives than other young adults. As shown in Figure 20, three quarters of YELs think that “most of the time people try to be helpful,” while a quarter believe that “most of the time people are just looking out for themselves.” In contrast, young people in general are more than twice as likely to answer “people are looking out for themselves” as to say “people try to be helpful.” It is no surprise that elected officials, who win office in large measure because they have built and sustained relationships with individuals and organizations in their communities, would show trust in others. People who assume that others are apt to look out for themselves first, or people who don’t enjoy interacting with others, might select themselves out of the pool of potential officeholders.

Figure 20. YELs are much more likely than AGP respondents to believe that people generally try to be helpful.

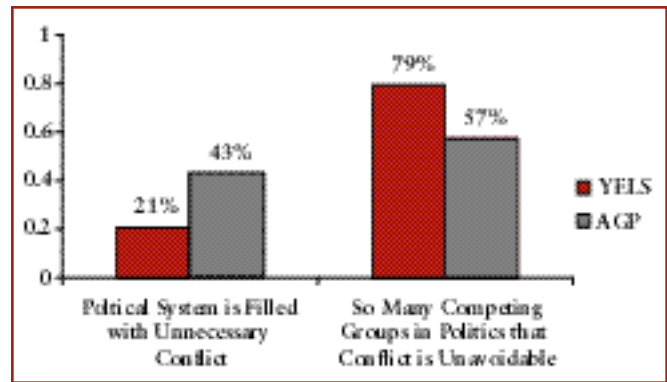


I think the vast majority of people are good; but the ones that are out for themselves are the most vocal.

—New England Republican Councilmember

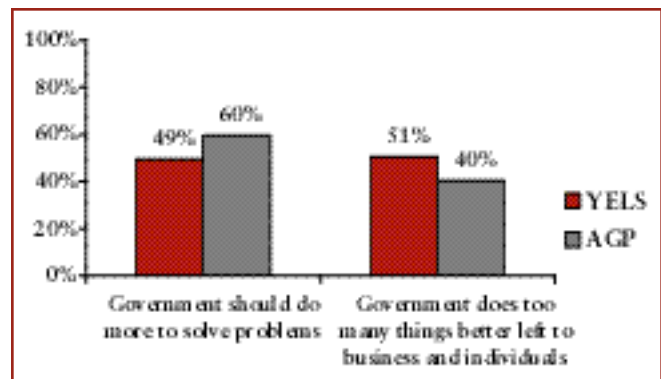
YELs also view the contentiousness of politics somewhat differently from their peers. Almost four-fifths of YELs take the view that “there are so many competing groups in politics that conflict is unavoidable,” while about one-fifth say that “the political system is filled with unnecessary conflict.” Among the young people in the AGP study, however, more than two-fifths see unnecessary conflict, compared with almost three-fifths who believe conflict is unavoidable (Figure 21). While majorities of both groups see conflict as unavoidable, the substantial gap between the two groups is consistent with the commonly expressed public distaste for political conflict.

Figure 21. YELs and AGP respondents differ in their views of conflict in politics.



Asked about the responsibilities of government, YELs are about evenly divided between those who feel that “Government should do more to solve problems” and those who say “Government does too many things better left to businesses and individuals.” Among young people in general, however, a majority want government to do more (Figure 22).

Figure 22. YELs are more likely than AGP respondents to say government does too much.



Regardless of whether they believe government should do more or less, it is not surprising that virtually all YELs believe government decisions matter. A large majority (81 percent) say such decisions have “a great

deal” of impact on the lives of citizens, and another 18 percent say “some” impact.

I just wish there were a way to get the constituents more involved—after all, the decisions that are made by their elected leaders will affect their lives as well as the lives of many others for years to come.

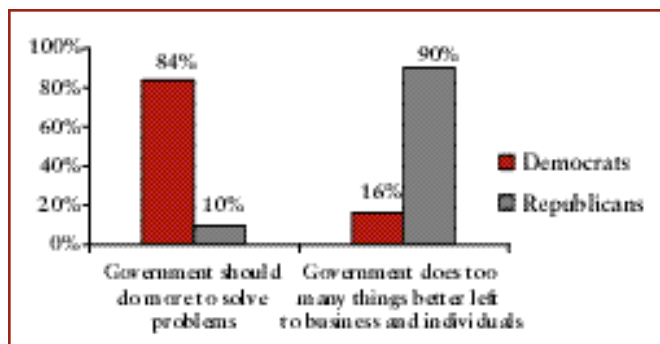
—Southern Democratic Councilmember

I had been involved with a grassroots lobbying organization for about 10 years. That experience led to a belief that it really matters who is in office.

—Western Republican Legislator

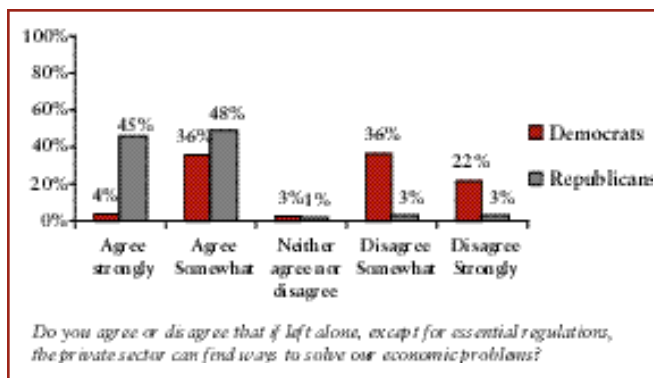
However, young elected officials differ predictably along partisan lines about the roles of government and business relative to one another. As we would expect, a large majority of Democrats think that “government should do more to solve problems,” while an even larger majority of Republicans assert that “government does too many things better left to businesses and individuals.”(Figure 23)

Figure 23. Democratic and Republican YELs conform to their parties’ traditional beliefs about the role of government.



When asked whether the private sector, if left alone except for essential regulations, can find ways to solve our economic problems, Republican YELs express overwhelming agreement (93 percent) while Democratic YELs are more ambivalent (40 percent agree, while 58 percent disagree) (Figure 24). In other words, the attitudes of young elected officials essentially reflect the traditional differences between the parties when it comes to views about the scope and size of government.

Figure 24. Republican YELs are more likely than their Democratic colleagues to believe the private sector can solve our economic problems.



Expressing a recurrent paradox of politics and the practical problem-solving task at its heart, one YEL noted that the ideals of leaders and the goals of constituents may be at odds: “You run because you believe in things, but what people want is to have their trash picked up on time.”

—Mid-Atlantic Councilman

Idealism

Discussing the importance of idealism in politics, YELs expressed mixed feelings. Many believed that it would take at least a measure of idealism to run for state or municipal office, given the irregular hours and generally poor pay. Some emphasized maintaining ideals, while others focused on practicality and the need to “play the game” in order to get things done.

A few of their thoughts:

“You can’t be so idealistic that you tick everyone off in the room.”

“Independent thinking is paramount.”

“Advocate but do not offend.”

“People think of young people, and we think of ourselves, as being more idealistic and optimistic. We have to think about how we can hold onto some of that idealism.”

“What matters is ideas, not idealism.”



YELs and Youth Civic Engagement

While 96 percent of YELs responding to the survey – perhaps choosing what they perceived to be the “right” answer – agreed either strongly or somewhat that “I have a responsibility to encourage more youth participation in politics,” YELs at the conference expressed little resonance with the idea that they have a special responsibility for encouraging young people to become involved in politics, or that they should be expected to speak for other young people. In discussions about the low voting rates and widespread lack of interest in politics and government among young people, many YELs resisted the suggestion that they might have primary responsibility for representing youth, mobilizing youth, or dealing with youth-oriented issues. Basing an election campaign on appealing to young people does not work—here everyone agreed. One legislator distinguished between his obligations as a leader and the need to run a winning race: “As a person who is elected, I have the responsibility to reach out to young people; but as a candidate, I can’t advise putting resources into trying to get young people to vote – because they don’t.” Anticipating her re-election campaign, a city councilwoman in a university district made a similar distinction: “Next time, I won’t put money into the dorm because they didn’t come out last time; but I do have meetings in the dorm because I represent those people.”

Even those young voters who do go to the polls may not be swayed by a candidate’s youth. Several YELs mentioned putting extensive resources into trying to mobilize the youth vote in their first campaigns, only to see an equal number of young voters support their opponents.

Whether or not YELs could count on a youth vote, they recognized the value of encouraging young people to participate in politics. One YEL, who has experience as a teacher, focused on the need to start early with civic education, certainly by middle school and not wait until high school. Many emphasized the need to “make it real” and connect to kids by dealing with issues they care about. Several noted that they themselves were not interested in politics in high school and sometimes even in college. Not until something political affected their lives directly did they step up to run. Thus, they advocated motivating young people through programs that deal with compelling issues and activities that engage them in the process.

One legislator told of going into high schools and asking students to propose ways to handle issues they care about—for example, lunch breaks, driving permits, funds for college. “You need to connect personally with kids. You’ve got to be creative,” she said.

Among other approaches, YELs have recruited high school students to hand out campaign literature, brought them into the legislature as interns or pages, staged days when students “run” the city, and established youth advisory groups for local jurisdictions.

Another legislator commented, “What we’re doing is planting seeds. We need to give the kids respect to make their own decisions and do what they think is right.”

CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE OF FOSTERING FUTURE PUBLIC LEADERS

The Young Elected Leaders Project led us to conclude that politics and governance would benefit from deliberate efforts to reach out to find potential new leaders as well as from efforts to build the capacity of young people already in office. Such efforts would focus on: (1) attracting greater numbers of young women and men to electoral politics; (2) recruiting a diverse candidate pool; and (3) devising programs that give young officeholders information, tools and support to enhance their individual and collective effectiveness as future public leaders.

The United States faces no shortage of elective office seekers. Races in local government and for school boards do sometimes go begging for candidates, but most public offices are held by people who beat off competition to win and retain their positions. Should we be concerned, then, with increasing the candidate pool? Does the under thirty-five generation bring something special to government? Does it matter that very few young people are among our elected officials?

Based on our study, perhaps not, at least insofar as public policies are concerned. With the possible exception of generational differences in attitudes about changing social norms (for example, gay rights), today’s young elected officials appear to conform to conventional partisan patterns. Not particularly idealistic, they are solid citizens who have found their way into the public arena at an early age, often because family or friends have pointed out the path. But looking ahead to our collective future, there are reasons beyond the present-day issue agenda to care about who enters and rises in elective office – and thus, reasons for us to encourage office – seeking among young people and to work with young elected leaders.

- First, by their very presence, young elected leaders serve as role models and inspirations to other young people evaluating their own prospects. If we believe that youth civic engagement at any level – from

simply voting to running for office – matters, then there is value in offering young people examples of leaders from their peer group.

- Second, while age by itself may not be closely correlated with political views, other demographic differences – race and ethnicity, gender, and religious outlook, to name a few – are more apt to be associated with distinctive perspectives and styles. The more inclusive our pool of potential officeholders, the more likely we are to have leaders who reflect the heterogeneity of the electorate they serve. If young people are going to run for elective office, we should look for ways to ensure that the ranks of these candidates are appropriately diverse.
- Finally, knowing that many young people who do enter public office will move up to become our top leaders, we might want to begin working with them at this early stage in their political careers. In programs structured to provide information, context, and a network of peers with whom to reflect on the implications of policies and policymaking, we could offer them opportunities for in-depth consideration of emerging issue areas as well as effective approaches to governing.

Attracting Young People to Electoral Politics

The young elected officials in our study expect other young people who are interested in politics to find their own ways into politics. As a matter of principle, they believe that encouraging youth civic engagement is a good idea, and in survey responses they were positive about participating in such efforts. In listening to the young elected officials at the conference, however, it was clear that they do not dwell on the small numbers of young people in elected office or view this as a societal problem, and they do not instinctively see themselves as responsible for bringing other young men and women into the public arena. They are very vocal about the fact that the people who come to the polls on election day and help them to win office are far more likely to be senior citizens than newly enfranchised young people, which gives them little incentive to focus on eligible but non-voting young citizens.

Nonetheless, as a matter of civic responsibility and commitment to the political process, young elected officials say they are amenable to the task of increasing political participation and could be convinced to be more interested and involved with attracting other young people to join them in the electoral arena. They will likely not take the initiative without being encouraged and even assisted. Busy, even overburdened, if left to their own devices, they will not focus on expanding youth civic engagement in their commu-

nities. Yet many could be persuaded that shouldering this additional burden of their young leadership is an important part of their public responsibility, one that could add to the promise of a vibrant, healthy democracy for their lifetimes and beyond. If we want them to do something, we must intervene actively, giving them incentives to get involved.

Recruiting a Diverse Candidate Pool



What about the quality of today's office seekers and the composition of the candidate pool? These days one often hears expressions of concern that the best and brightest do not enter public service. The young elected leaders we met were raised in an era of diminishing admiration and even respect for figures of authority, including politicians. To help create optimal conditions for tomorrow's democracy, should we not agree to make political and governmental leadership attractive to today's youngsters? How could such a goal be approached? What would it take for a bright seventh grader to dream about becoming a lawmaker in the way she or he might fantasize life as a television personality or sports star? What would convince them that public leadership is worthwhile, positive and can even be noble?

At the beginning of a new century in a rapidly changing world and in a multi-cultural, heterogeneous, pluralistic democracy, a strong component of the leadership pool for the future as it appears in our study is largely mono-cultural and homogeneous. A thumbnail sketch of today's young elected officials augurs that a sizeable portion of tomorrow's top leaders will be male, Caucasian, Christian, married with children, highly educated, affluent, joiners, members of political families and networks, and moderate to conservative in attitude. This picture of the future is strikingly similar to the familiar one from past generations, with incumbents re-elected by majorities of voters generally approving of their performance. For many people, continuity is reassuring and suggests stability. But for those who would like the picture of public leadership to take on a different appearance, the challenge will be to intervene deliberately to overcome the gravitational force of historical patterns and alter the predictable sequence of events.

If those who most desire expansion and especially diversification in the composition of our society's leadership are also those who deride politicians and continue to eschew politics, significant change will be unlikely to occur. To win the brass ring, it is necessary to climb on the merry-go-round and take the ride.

Walking away guarantees the prize to someone else. If it is desirable to have elected governmental leaders who more closely mirror the increasingly variegated population of the United States, then it will be necessary to make a strong, organized commitment to recruiting women and members of underrepresented groups, including ethnic, racial, and religious minorities.

Devising Programs for Our Future Top Leaders

The young men and women we found holding office in almost every state constitute a very small proportion of the total population of elected officials, yet they are the pool from which many of tomorrow's most powerful public leaders will be drawn. Remembering that half of the Senators, U.S. Representatives and Governors serving currently won their first elective offices before age thirty-five, we can expect a good number of today's young officeholders to remain in politics and rise to positions of power in their localities and in Washington, D.C.. They have the ambition, the experience, the know-how, the connections – and history is on their side.

If people who come into politics early are likely to stay in politics and rise to power, we would do well to set a new national goal: devise concrete means to attract promising young people to public life and retain them in the public sphere. Show them the opportunities and routes to leadership, help them to learn the ropes and acquire valuable skills. Young people who do not come from political families with available role models and mentors to help pave the way could be encouraged and aided by a variety of educational and apprenticeship programs designed to inspire and cultivate future political leadership.

While public leadership is deeply satisfying, it is also highly stressful—so said many of the young officials at our conference and answering our survey. The demands of public life seem to militate against a young leader's personal and professional development. Reaching out to attract a large and diverse group of young newcomers to politics and leadership will depend on making public life attractive to them, not only as an arena for worthwhile action, but also as a manageable, sustainable way of life. We want public leaders who are good citizens in their communities, successful in their professional occupations, and who lead fulfilling personal and family lives. Yet the intractable pressures of public life often seem incompatible with family values and professional responsibilities. A life in public is just that—a life outside of one's home and office. Being home during the evening and weekends for a spouse or partner; being available to young children for a myriad of care-giving and nurturing activities; being an active profes-

sional colleague ready to share the workload and help build the enterprise—these are the common calls of life for people in their twenties and thirties. They also loom as central problems for young people with political aspirations. This is especially the case for young mothers and for young men and women of diverse backgrounds who lack personal financial resources—two groups sorely underrepresented among today's young elected officials. As a society committed to developing tomorrow's leadership, we must confront these dilemmas and ask whether the political arena as it is structured can be a young person's place.

Politics is a tough life, yet an enticing one for the few who head in deliberately or somehow find themselves there at a young age. History tells us that by virtue of being there already, they are well positioned for a long stay and a rising trajectory. Therefore, in addition to facing the challenges inherent in expanding and diversifying the pool of candidates for future public leadership, it is equally important to recognize the potential of the young people who have already stepped forward.

Given the likelihood that today's young officeholders will be many of tomorrow's most powerful leaders, reaching out to assist them in becoming better leaders seems like a perfect opportunity to improve the quality of politics and governance. Thus, it is important to identify them, connect them with one another, contribute to their development as effective future leaders. The young elected officials who answered our survey and attended our conference expressed strong interest in meeting and learning from one another as well as in educational opportunities to increase their knowledge and performance. They are amenable to becoming part of a national network of young leaders engaged in learning and in exchanging information about issues of mutual concern. The idea of a connected community of young people in politics is something they had not considered before our survey and conference, but one which many welcomed enthusiastically.

Future Research

As for future research, there are many questions to pursue. Our three-stage Young Elected Leaders Project—survey, conference—yielded considerable information about a topic heretofore unexplored. Age and politics, specifically youth and elective office, has not been a subject of particular interest or scholarly study. (Most of the attention on youth political participation has focused on the low voting rates of young people.) Yet the territory of age and politics in general is a relatively unexplored terrain. In a time when education and professional training are extending the years of schooling and promoting long-term loan debt; when the pace and pressures of everyday

life are intensifying; when the burdens of earning an income and the stresses of raising a family appear to be increasing; when mobility makes it less likely that people will remain rooted in the same communities over many decades; when retirement constitutes a significant portion of the life span and longevity is ever more common—questions about age and public leadership in a representative democracy could be provocative and worthwhile to examine.

What follows are simply a few of the questions that arise immediately from our discoveries in the Young Elected Leaders Project.

- To the extent that young elected leaders seem different from other elected leaders, is the salient explanation their age or their status as newcomers to office?

Do they more closely resemble young people in general or novice officeholders of any age?

- Is there a defined set of issues and policies that interest and affect young people distinctively? Do young elected officials represent the interests of young citizens on these and other issues? Should they?
- Is there any consensus among young leaders about reforms to the political system (e.g. campaign finance, term limits, direct democracy, voting schedules and methods, etc.)? Would any particular set of reforms advantage newcomers to office, especially young candidates?
- What is the relationship between the two major political parties and young candidates/officeholders?
- What roles are minor parties playing in connecting young people to the political system?
- In what ways is it meaningful to the democracy to elect young citizens to public office? Would our politics and government change and/or improve if a larger proportion of elected officials were under age 35?
- Do young elected leaders play a distinctive role in introducing new technology into government?
- Would making young elected officials more visible have an impact on youth civic engagement? What sorts of organized efforts might bring more young people into political participation, including electoral politics?
- Why are young elected officials no more diverse than their older counterparts? What accounts for the very small numbers of women and people of

color among young elected officials? Is there room in political office for young newcomers who fall outside the majority demographic?

- Are politically inclined and/or experienced women holding back and delaying officeseeking because of family responsibilities? For example, do women choose not to run for state and/or national office when a lengthy commute would be required?
- What influences persuade young people to seek public office? What forces dissuade them from considering such an option? In particular, in what ways and to what extent does family political behavior shape the political engagement of successive generations?
- What is the impact of participation in student government in high school and/or college? To what extent does it predispose or prepare young people for future public leadership? What explains the gender differences in student government participation found in our survey of young elected officials?
- How is youth culture (e.g. pop and/or hip hop culture) shaping the ways young people view the political world and affecting their political attitudes and understanding? How are new communications technologies, with their broad reach and their capacity for mobilization, shaping youth political behavior?



NOTES

¹ See Appendix for a list of the Presidents, members of Congress and governors who won their first elective offices at age 35 or younger.

² Quotations throughout this report are drawn both from survey respondents and from conference participants.

³ Keeter, Scott, Zukin, Cliff, Andolina, Molly, and Jenkins, Krista. (2002). *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait*. CIRCLE, The Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning and Engagement.

⁴ Congressional data from www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2002/pages/house. In statewide elective executive positions, the small number of YELs (5 out of 316 positions) makes meaningful partisan comparisons impossible. At the municipal level, accurate and complete information about party identification is not available.

⁵ The proportions were similar among our survey respondents: 322 men (85 percent) and 58 women (15 percent).

⁶ “Women in Elective Office 2002.” Fact sheet published by Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ. 2/03. Mayoral information compiled from U.S. Conference of Mayors data.

⁷ As a result of the 2002 elections, 4 new YELs entered Congress, including one woman.

⁸ This gender imbalance is consistent with what Eagleton’s Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) has learned in its research about state legislators. In a 2001 study, CAWP found that 24 percent of women legislators were under age 50, compared with 39 percent of their male counterparts. In addition, on average, a woman serving as a state senator in 2001 started in that position at age 50, and the average age of entry for women state representatives was 49. Men were significantly more likely than women to begin serving at a relatively young age. About three in 10 male state senators (28%) and state representatives (30%) entered those positions when they were under 40 years of age. This compares with only 11% of women state senators and 14% of women state representatives. (*Women in State Legislatures: Past, Present, Future*. Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2001)

⁹ Jennings, M. Kent and Niemi, Richard G. (1968). “The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child.” *The American Political Science Review* 62 (1), 169-184. Jennings, M. Kent, Stoker, Laura, and Bowers, Jake. (1999, September). “Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined.” Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Convention, Atlanta, GA. Overall, research demonstrates that in households where there is more political conversation, political attitudes are more likely to be transmitted from parent to child. This relationship tends to be more robust with regard to party affiliation than to other political attitudes or behaviors. In the classic study by Jennings and Niemi, only frequency of political conversation between husband and wife was associated with consistency of party identification between parents and children. Frequency of political conversations between children and parents was not associated with children adopting the party identifications of their parents.



- ¹⁰ Totals exceed 100 percent because multiple responses were possible for this question.
- ¹¹ Since the AGP study did not ask for father's level of education, only the mother's level of education is used here for comparison.
- ¹² Two percent did not know or recall whether they had participated.
- ¹³ Although there appears to be a connection between community service and high levels of political engagement among YELs, there is little evidence that, in general, people who take part in community service also engage in traditional political behaviors such as voting or writing letters to their representatives. According to Walker (2002), no studies have linked participation in service learning to political participation, perhaps because in studies of the general population, few people are very active participants in both the political process and in more community-service-oriented activities. In fact, Keeter et. al. (2002) found that only 16 percent of their survey respondents were active participants in both the civic and electoral arenas, participating in two or more civic activities and two or more activities that are more traditionally defined as political. Although it might be possible with a large enough sample to find a significant correlation between these two types of engagement, it would be difficult to find a high correlation between community service and political participation in most studies simply because there is such a small group of individuals that undertakes both activities. (Walker, Tobi. (2002). "Service as a Pathway to Political Participation: What Research Tells Us", *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4):1830188.)
- ¹⁴ It may be tempting to conclude that the YEL data stand as evidence that today's young elected women have discovered how to combine motherhood with office holding and some clearly have. However, it is important to bear in mind that women constitute only a very small proportion of YELs. Perhaps one explanation for the low numbers of young women elected to office is that women with political ambitions delay office seeking in deference to family obligations.
- ¹⁵ A study of 464 non-incumbent candidates for state legislatures that asked the same question used on the survey of YELs found that men were more than three times more likely than women to be "self-starters", who threw their hats into the ring solely on their own decisions. By contrast, women were more than twice as likely as men to have been persuaded to run. (*Term Limits and the Representation of Women*, 2001, Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ. Data cited are from Gary Moncrief, Peeverill Squires, Malcolm Jewell, *Who Runs for the Legislature?* Prentice-Hall Inc., 2001.)
- ¹⁶ For this purpose, "issue" was broadly defined to include not just public policy issues, but also broad concerns such as the quality of government and personal motivators such as the desire to serve the public.
- ¹⁷ Total exceeds 100 percent because multiple answers to this question were permitted.
- ¹⁸ Data from Gallup, CNN, U.S.A. Today Polls, February and March 2002. Online source: Roper Center, University of Connecticut, Public Opinion Online, 2002.



POLITICAL GENERATION NEXT: AMERICA'S YOUNG ELECTED LEADERS

May 15-18, 2003

Thursday, May 15

5:00-7:30 Reception and Dinner
7:45-9:30 Welcome and Introductions
Young Elected Officials-
An Overview

Friday, May 16

9:00-10:00 Eagleton Survey of Young
Elected Officials
10:15-12:15 Discussion Groups
12:30-1:45 Lunch
2:00-4:00 Youth Public Opinion

Speakers:

Ed Goeas,
President and CEO
The Tarrance Group

Sharon Kolling,
Polling Analyst
Lake Snell Perry & Associates

Mark Hugo Lopez,
Research Director
Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement
(CIRCLE),
University of Maryland

Moderator:

Tobi Walker,
Program Officer, Public Policy
The Pew Charitable Trusts

5:00-6:30 Light Supper Reception

6:30-8:30 Roundtable with
Young Members of Congress

Confirmed:

Congressman Adam Putnam, *Florida*
Congressman Artur Davis, *Alabama*
Congressman Michael Ferguson,
New Jersey

8:30-9:30 Dessert Buffet

Saturday, May 17

8:00-10:00 Discussion Groups
10:30-2:00 Working Lunch: Media Training
Chris Jahnke,
President
Positive Communications
2:30-4:30 Discussion Groups
6:15-7:15 Reception at New Jersey Governor's
Mansion, Princeton, NJ
7:45-9:30 Dinner in Princeton
9:30-10:30 Coffee/Dessert with Mayor
of Princeton

Sunday, May 18

9:30 - 10:30 What Looks Worst When It's
Working Best: The Dilemma of
Representative Democracy

Speaker:

Alan Rosenthal
Professor of Public Policy,
Rutgers University

10:45-12:00 Young Elected Leaders-
What's Next?



DISCUSSION GROUP LEADERS AND RAPPORTEURS

Political Generation Next: America's Young Elected Leaders featured three discussion sessions. For these sessions, conference participants were divided into four groups, with different groups each time. Every group was facilitated by a discussion group leader who brought to the sessions extensive knowledge of politics and experience working with elected officials. In addition, a rapporteur in each group kept detailed notes on the session, recording themes and highlights of the discussion as well as quotes from individual participants. At the conclusion of each discussion period, the rapporteurs met to compare notes and share information about the overall content, tone and direction of the discussion. The rapporteur coordinator compiled the reports from all of the groups and prepared a summary which was presented at the final conference session as a starting point for drawing conclusions. After the conference, discussion group leaders and rapporteurs met to share overall impressions of the conference and reflections on what was learned there.

Discussion Group Leaders

Kathleen Casey

*Director, Program for Women Public Officials
Center for American Women and Politics
Eagleton Institute of Politics*

Karl Kurtz

*Director of State Services
National Conference of State Legislatures*

Ingrid Reed

*Director, Eagleton New Jersey Project
Eagleton Institute of Politics*

John Weingart

*Associate Director
Eagleton Institute of Politics*

Rapporteurs

Beth Leech (Rapporteur Coordinator)

*Professor of Political Science
Rutgers University*

Corey Cook

*Assistant Professor
San Francisco State University
Visiting Instructor
Rutgers University*

Kathy Kleeman

*Senior Program Associate
Eagleton Institute of Politics*

Elizabeth Matto

*Visiting Research Scholar
Eagleton Institute of Politics*

Kira Sanbonmatsu

*Assistant Professor of Political Science
The Ohio State University
Visiting Professor
Center for American Women and Politics
Eagleton Institute of Politics*



DISCUSSION GROUPS

Session One - Lives and Careers of Young Elected Leaders

What are the pivotal events in your life that helped shape your political thinking and desire to get involved?

What life experiences best prepared you for political office?

Who are your heroes or mentors?

To what extent would it be accurate to say you were idealistic when you entered office? Has that idealism been shaped, changed or tempered by your experiences in office?

Are your politics like those of your parents? Have you taken a new direction, made a different party choice—or are you more or less in agreement with the politics you grew up with?

Our survey shows that 29% of YELs are from families with members who have held political office. Does that figure surprise you in either direction—so many or so few? Is it easier for young people to break into politics if they have family connections?

What were the biggest surprises you encountered on entering elective office? What were the biggest frustrations or rewards?

What do you like most about the job? Least? Explain.

How much spousal/partner/family support do you need or do you have for your political life?

Do personal or family obligations affect you differently from your older counterparts?

Are there specific professional problems that confront you as a young elected official? Do these differ by gender?

Do you plan to remain in government? What are your aspirations and plans regarding government and politics?

Session Two - Perspectives on Politics and Governing

Do you think of yourself as a change agent? Are young officeholders inclined to be change agents?

What, if anything, do young elected leaders have in common with one another across other differences? Are there—and should there be—issues that bring young elected officials together? Are there issues where generational concerns trump partisan and ideological perspectives? Are there actual or potential distinctive contributions made by younger officials? What are they?

Are your relationships with constituents different from those of your colleagues because of your age? Is this true for constituents of any particular age—e.g. do you relate differently to younger constituents? Or to seniors? Are young constituents are more likely to contact you because you are young?

Do young elected officials have an obligation to focus on representing young people?

Do colleagues and leaders treat you differently because of your age? How do other factors play into this treatment—e.g. partisanship, gender, race, ethnicity?



What have been the reactions of the party leaders, other elected officials, and members of the press to your participation, given your age? How have you handled these reactions?

Have you found that leadership roles are open to young elected officials? Are younger officials part of informal influence structures?

Do young elected officials function differently in office from their older colleagues? In what ways?

Do young candidates face any special problems? Do they have any advantages? What kinds of young people have the best hope of competing for office successfully?

What distinguishes YELs from similarly situated young people? Did any of your acquaintances or friends in student government or political or social circles run for office? If not, why didn't they run?

Do you think public financing of political campaigns would help young candidates in particular? What about mandatory provision of free media time to candidates?

What barriers—if any—do you see for young people in raising money, campaigning, dealing with political parties, and holding office?

Is there a political or governmental process you have encountered that you would like to see changed? One in your jurisdiction that you would like to see imitated elsewhere?



Session Three - Engaging Apolitical Generation Next

What would you like young people to know about the political system? Are there attitudes or impressions that you think it is important to share? To change?

Do young elected officials have, or take upon themselves, a special responsibility for involving young people in the political system? If so, how have you done this? Has it been effective? Why or why not? Should more young people be encouraged to participate in politics? Why or why not? If yes, how would you do this? Would making young elected officials more visible have any impact on youth civic engagement?

What sorts of organized efforts might bring more young people into political participation, including electoral politics?

What can institutions—e.g. the city council, the legislature, universities—do to expand and enhance civic engagement?

Our data show YELs are more trusting of people than are other young people. Can you help us understand this finding? How do you see your generation's cynicism?

Have you made special appeals to young voters in your campaigns? Do you think young people are more likely to get involved in your campaigns?

Why are young elected officials no more diverse than their older counterparts? What accounts for the very small numbers of women and people of color among young elected officials? Is there room in political office for young newcomers who are not highly educated and/or affluent?

Some people believe that it is especially valuable to increase the representation of particular groups, such as women or people of color. Should anyone want more young people as a group in elective office? Do you? Why?

What advice would you give to a young person considering running for office?

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7. How much help did your local or state party give you in the last general election?
- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| 12% | A great deal of help | .3% | No active party organization in my district |
| 23% | Some help | 2% | They worked against me |
| 15% | No help at all | 3% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| 22% | No party involved because election was non-partisan | | |

8. When you first ran for elective office, was the race: *(Check as many as apply)*
- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 42% | Contested in primary | 75% | Contested in general |
| 20% | Uncontested in primary | 9% | Uncontested in general |
| 38% | No primary/Not applicable | | |
| | | 16% | Not applicable |

9. When deciding on running for your first elective office, how concerned were you about your fund-raising?
- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| 36% | Very concerned | 6% | Not concerned at all |
| 36% | Somewhat concerned | 3% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| 21% | Not very concerned | | |

9A. Please describe why fundraising was or was not a concern in your first election.

10. How often was politics discussed in your family when you were growing up?
- | | | | |
|-----|------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 38% | Very often | 5% | Never |
| 35% | Sometimes | .3% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| 22% | Rarely | | |

11. Has anyone in your family ever held public office? *(elected or appointed)*
- | | | | |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 29% | Yes <i>(please specify the offices)</i> _____ | | |
| 70% | No (Skip to question # 12) | | |
| 1% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion (Skip to question # 12) | | |
-

- 11A. If yes, what is their relationship to you? *(check as many as apply)*
- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| .9% | Husband | 7% | Cousin |
| .9% | Wife | 2% | Aunt |
| 51% | Father | 19% | Uncle |
| 17% | Mother | 25% | Other <i>(please specify)</i> |
| 6% | Brother/Sister | 0% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |

- 11B. Did a family member immediately precede you in the seat you now hold?
- | | | |
|--------|--------|---|
| 8% Yes | 92% No | 0% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
|--------|--------|---|

12. Which of the following organized activities did you participate in while in high school? *(Check all that apply)*

- | In School | Outside of School |
|---|--|
| 74% <input type="checkbox"/> Organized sports | 44% <input type="checkbox"/> Organized sports |
| 24% <input type="checkbox"/> Band/Chorus | 43% <input type="checkbox"/> Religious youth groups |
| 49% <input type="checkbox"/> Student council/Student government | 16% <input type="checkbox"/> Political clubs (e.g. Young Democrats or Young Republicans) |
| 19% <input type="checkbox"/> Yearbook committee | 4% <input type="checkbox"/> Boys/Girls Club |
| 17% <input type="checkbox"/> Debate | 5% <input type="checkbox"/> Model United Nations |
| 6% <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerleading/Drill Team/
Other spirit organization | 13% <input type="checkbox"/> Boys/Girls State |
| 15% <input type="checkbox"/> Drama club | 4% <input type="checkbox"/> FFA/FHA |
| 19% <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign language clubs | 4% <input type="checkbox"/> 4-H |
| 1% <input type="checkbox"/> Dance club | 8% <input type="checkbox"/> YMCA/YWCA |
| 19% <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | 18% <input type="checkbox"/> Boys/Girls Scouts |
| 22% <input type="checkbox"/> Service club | 41% <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service |
| 42% <input type="checkbox"/> Community service | 8% <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| 12% <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | 11% <input type="checkbox"/> None |
| 4% <input type="checkbox"/> None | 2% <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know/Don't Recall |
| .5% <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know/Don't Recall | |



- 12A. If you participated in community service while in high school, was it required or voluntary?
 7% Required
 90% Voluntary
 3% Don't Know/Don't Recall
13. When you were in high school, did your school have a student government?
 95% Yes
 4% No (**Skip to question #14**)
 1% Don't Know/Don't Recall (**Skip to question #14**)
- 13A. If yes, how did you participate? (*check all that apply*)
 45% Served in student government (*please specify the office*)
 28% Ran for office
 14% Worked on a campaign
 39% Was not involved in student government in any way
 2% Don't Know/Don't Recall
14. When you were in high school, did you take any courses that required you to pay attention to government, politics, or national issues?
 85% Yes
 13% No
 2% Don't Know/Don't Recall
15. Did you attend college?
 98% Yes
 2% No (**Skip to question #16**)
- 15A. If you attended college, which of the following organized activities did you participate in while in college?
 (*Check all that apply*)
- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|---|
| 30% | <input type="checkbox"/> Organized sports | 56% | <input type="checkbox"/> Community or volunteer work |
| 12% | <input type="checkbox"/> Student newspaper | 27% | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>) |
| 10% | <input type="checkbox"/> Student radio or television | 14% | <input type="checkbox"/> None |
| 38% | <input type="checkbox"/> Student government | 1% | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
16. How closely do you follow news about each of the following areas?
- | | Very closely | Somewhat closely | Not very closely | Don't Know |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| Religion | 21% | 51% | 27% | 1% |
| State politics | 79% | 19% | 2% | .3% |
| Entertainment | 11% | 32% | 55% | 2% |
| Sports | 33% | 31% | 35% | 1% |
| Computers and the Internet | 10% | 45% | 45% | 1% |
| International affairs | 39% | 49% | 11% | 1% |
| National politics | 72% | 26% | 2% | .3% |
| Business and industry | 35% | 55% | 10% | .5% |
| The economy | 47% | 47% | 6% | .3% |
| Local politics | 89% | 9% | 2% | .3% |
| The environment | 23% | 47% | 28% | 2% |

Please mark the choice that best represents how you feel, even if neither is exactly right.

17. 72% Most of the time people try to be helpful.
 OR
 24% Most of the time people are just looking out for themselves.
 3% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion



Now, please answer several questions about your use of the media.

24. In the average week, please indicate how many days you do each of the following:

Read a newspaper

1%	0	6%	5
1%	1	8%	6
2%	2	8%	7
1%	3	.3%	D/K
3%	4		

Read magazines like *Newsweek*, *Time*, or *U.S. News and World Report*?

24%	0	3%	5
33%	1	.5%	6
19%	2	4%	7
10%	3	.4%	D/K
4%	4		

Watch the national news on television

8%	0	12%	5
9%	1	6%	6
11%	2	33%	7
10%	3	.8%	D/K
10%	4		

Listen to the national news on radio

10%	0	25%	5
6%	1	7%	6
6%	2	32%	7
7%	3	2%	D/K
5%	4		

Read news on the Internet

12%	0	20%	5
7%	1	4%	6
11%	2	31%	7
7%	3	1%	D/K
6%	4		

Read about, listen to, or watch local news

2%	0	12%	5
2%	1	8%	6
5%	2	57%	7
7%	3	1%	D/K
6%	4		

25. On average, how often do you personally – not your staff – use e-mail to send or receive messages related to your job as an elected official?

57%	More than once a day	3%	Less than once a week
15%	About once a day	2%	Never
19%	A few times a week	3%	Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
4%	About once a week		

26. On average, how often do you personally – not your staff – use the Internet or the World Wide Web to find information which is of use to you in your work as an elected official?

38%	Once a day or more	10%	Once a month or less
28%	A few times a week	2%	Never
10%	About once a week	.3%	Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
11%	A few times a month		

27. Please mark all the types of groups you have worked for as a volunteer

In the two years before you became an elected official:

- 50% A religious group
- 16% A health organization
- 72% A civic or community organization, or a group providing social services
- 19% A group involved with the arts
- 37% A group involved with education
- 71% A political party
- 74% An election campaign
- 17% An environmental organization
- 48% A child or youth program
- 36% An organization to help the poor, elderly or homeless
- 26% A recreation group
- 9% Other (*please specify*)
- 2% None
- .5% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion

In the past 12 months:

- 49% A religious group
- 22% A health organization
- 72% A civic or community organization, or a group providing social services
- 27% A group involved with the arts
- 45% A group involved with education
- 76% A political party
- 82% An election campaign
- 21% An environmental organization
- 50% A child or youth program
- 37% An organization to help the poor, elderly or homeless
- 27% A recreation group
- 7% Other (*please specify*)
- 2.0% None
- 1% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion

Please indicate your opinions about the following issues:

28A. A constitutional amendment to permit prayer in the public schools.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 24% Strongly favor | 22% Strongly Oppose |
| 23% Favor | 14% Neither Favor nor Oppose |
| 17% Oppose | |

28B. A law that would allow gay and lesbian couples to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 23% Strongly favor | 25% Strongly Oppose |
| 22% Favor | 17% Neither Favor nor Oppose |
| 13% Oppose | |

28C. A law which would allow your state to give preferences in job hiring and school admission on the basis of race.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 6% Strongly favor | 36% Strongly Oppose |
| 17% Favor | 15% Neither Favor nor Oppose |
| 26% Oppose | |

28D. A law giving parents government-funded school vouchers to pay for tuition at the public, private or religious school of their choice.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 16% Strongly favor | 25% Strongly Oppose |
| 24% Favor | 12% Neither Favor nor Oppose |
| 23% Oppose | |

28E. A law that would provide harsher penalties for hate crimes.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 28% Strongly favor | 8% Strongly Oppose |
| 37% Favor | 11% Neither Favor nor Oppose |
| 16% Oppose | |

28F. A law banning the possession of handguns except by the police and other authorized persons.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 8% Strongly favor | 42% Strongly Oppose |
| 12% Favor | 7% Neither Favor nor Oppose |
| 31% Oppose | |



The following questions will help us develop a national picture of young elected officials today.

29. Do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?
- | | | | |
|-----|-------------|----|---------------------------------------|
| 50% | Democrat | 3% | Something Else/Other (please specify) |
| 41% | Republican | | |
| 6% | Independent | 1% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
-
30. In general, would you describe your political views as:
- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 6% | Very conservative | 15% | Liberal |
| 29% | Conservative | 5% | Very liberal |
| 44% | Moderate | 1% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
31. Which do you consider yourself to be?
- | | | | |
|-----|---|----|--------------------------------------|
| 36% | Catholic | 4% | Jewish |
| 47% | Protestant (includes Baptist, Episcopalian, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, Mormon, etc) | 4% | Atheist/Agnostic |
| | | 6% | Other (please specify) _____ |
| | | 4% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
32. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?
- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 8% | More than once a week | 7% | Seldom |
| 35% | Once a week | 6% | Never |
| 25% | Once or twice a month | .5% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| 20% | A few times a year | | |
33. Other than being an elected official, are you currently employed in another occupation?
- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 86% | Yes | 13% | No |
| | 81% Employed full-time | .8% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| | 19% Employed part-time | | |
34. What is or was your primary occupation?
- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--|
| 20% | Attorney | 13% | Self-employed/Business Owner/Entrepreneur |
| .5% | Clerical/Secretary | 1% | Social Worker |
| .5% | College/University Professor | 8% | Government Employee/Civil Servant |
| 3% | Elementary or Secondary School Teacher | 0% | Appointed Official |
| 1% | Farmer | 2% | Homemaker |
| 4% | Insurance Salesperson | 2% | Service Occupation (e.g. child care provider, police and fire, food preparation) |
| 2% | Retail | .5% | Precision Production, Craft or Repair Occupation (e.g. mechanic, plumber, electrician, construction) |
| .5% | Nurse/Other Health Worker | .3% | Never employed outside elective office |
| .3% | Physician/ Dentist | 27% | Other (please specify) _____ |
| 10% | Manager/Administrator | 3% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| 2% | Information Technology Specialist | | |
| 2% | Real Estate Broker or Agent | | |
35. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--------------------------------------|
| .5% | High school graduate, Grade 12, or GED certificate | 9% | Some graduate school |
| 1% | Business, technical, or vocational school AFTER high school | 15% | Master's (M.A., M.S.) |
| 3% | Associates/two-year degree | 22% | Law degree (J.D., L.L.B.) |
| 10% | Some college | .3% | Medical degree (M.D.) |
| 37% | College or university graduate (B.A., B.S. or other four-year degree received) | 1% | Other (please specify) _____ |
| | | .3% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
36. If you went to college, which of the following describes your undergraduate institution? (Check as many as apply)
- | | | | |
|-----|------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 62% | Public | 2% | Historically Black |
| 38% | Private | .5% | Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion |
| 1% | Single-sex | | |

36A. What was your major in college?

Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion

37. What is or was the highest level of education your mother completed?

7%	Less than high school (<i>up to grade 11</i>)	4%	Some graduate school
27%	High school graduate, Grade 12, or GED certificate	14%	Master's (M.A., M.S.)
8%	Business, technical, or vocational school AFTER high school	1%	Doctorate (<i>Ph.D.</i>)
6%	Associates/two-year degree	1%	Law degree (<i>J.D., L.L.B.</i>)
10%	Some college	5%	Medical degree (<i>M.D.</i>)
20%	College or university graduate (<i>B.A., B.S. or other four-year degree received</i>)	.5%	Other (<i>please specify</i>)
		1%	Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion



37A. What is or was the highest level of education your father completed?

8%	Less than high school (up to grade 11)	5%	Some graduate school
21%	High school graduate, Grade 12, or GED certificate	11%	Master's (M.A., M.S.)
4%	Business, technical, or vocational school AFTER high school	3%	Doctorate (<i>Ph.D.</i>)
5%	Associates/two-year degree	7%	Law degree (<i>J.D., L.L.B.</i>)
12%	Some college	3%	Medical degree (<i>M.D.</i>)
18%	College or university graduate (<i>B.A., B.S. or other four-year degree received</i>)	.5%	Other (<i>please specify</i>)
		2%	Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion

38. What is or was your mother's primary occupation?

.8%	Attorney	8%	Self-employed/Business Owner/Entrepreneur
9%	Clerical/Secretary	3%	Social Worker
1%	College/University Professor	4%	Government Employee/Civil Servant
11%	Elementary or Secondary School Teacher	.8%	Elected Official/Appointed Official
.3%	Farmer	20%	Homemaker
.5%	Insurance Salesperson	3%	Service Occupation (<i>e.g. child care provider, police and fire, food preparation</i>)
3%	Retail	1%	Precision Production, Craft or Repair Occupation (<i>e.g. mechanic, plumber, construction, electrician</i>)
7%	Nurse/Other Health Worker	3%	Not employed
.5%	Physician/Dentist	13%	Other (<i>please specify</i>)
7%	Manager/Administrator	.8%	Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
.5%	Information Technology Specialist		
.8%	Real Estate Broker or Agent		

38A. What is or was your father's primary occupation?

5%	Attorney	16%	Self-employed/Business Owner/Entrepreneur
3%	College/University Professor	6%	Government Employee/Civil Servant
4%	Elementary or Secondary School Teacher	2%	Elected Official/Appointed Official
2%	Farmer	.3%	Homemaker
2%	Insurance Salesperson	5%	Service Occupation (<i>e.g. child care provider, police and fire, food preparation</i>)
1%	Retail	10%	Precision Production, Craft or Repair Occupation (<i>e.g. mechanic, plumber, electrician, construction</i>)
.8%	Nurse/Other Health Worker	5%	Not employed
3%	Physician/Dentist	23%	Other (<i>please specify</i>)
10%	Manager/Administrator	3%	Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
2%	Information Technology Specialist		
2%	Real Estate Broker or Agent		

39. How many siblings do you have? _____

Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion

40. Are you:
 85% Male
 15% Female
41. What is your date of birth? (month/day/year)_____
42. Do you have any children?
 43% Yes
 57% No (Skip to question #43)
- 42A. How many children do you have? _____
43. What is your marital status?
 62% Married
 5% Living as married/Living with someone
 3% Divorced
 .3% Widowed
 29% Never married
 .8% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
44. Are you of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Latin American background?
 8% Yes
 90% No
 1% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
- 44A. What is your race?
 81% Caucasian
 8% Black or African-American
 3% Asian or Pacific Islander
 .5% Native American
 2% Mixed-race
 5% Other (please specify)_____
 1% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
45. So that we can group all answers, is your total annual family income before taxes:
 2% Under \$20,000
 3% \$20,000 to just under \$30,000
 7% \$30,000 to just under \$40,000
 11% \$40,000 to just under \$50,000
 15% \$50,000 to just under \$65,000
 19% \$65,000 to just under \$80,000
 17% \$80,000 to just under \$100,000
 22% or over \$100,000
 4% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
46. Do you think an organized network of young elected officials would be useful?
 85% Yes
 6% No
 10% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
- 46A. If there were an organization for young elected officials, would you participate?
 84% Yes
 4% No
 12% Not Applicable/Don't Know/No Opinion
47. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience as a young elected official?



TOP U. S. ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO FIRST HELD ELECTED OFFICE AT AGE 35 OR YOUNGER

20th Century U.S. Presidents

12 Out of the 19 Presidents Were Age 35 or Younger When Elected to Their First Offices:	Age When First Elected
William McKinley (U.S. House of Representatives, OH)	34
Theodore Roosevelt (State Assembly, NY)	24
William H. Taft (Superior Court Judge, OH)	31
Warren G. Harding (State Senate, OH)	35
Calvin Coolidge (Councilman, Northampton, MA)	26
Franklin D. Roosevelt (State Senate, NY)	28
John Kennedy (U.S. House of Representatives, MA)	30
Lyndon B. Johnson (U.S. House of Representatives, TX)	29
Richard M. Nixon (U.S. House of Representatives, CA)	34
Gerald Ford (U.S. House of Representatives, MI)	35
Jimmy Carter (Board of Education, Sumter County, GA)	32
William J. Clinton (Attorney General, AR)	30



Senators

State	Name (Party)	First Elected Office	Age When First Elected
AR	Blanche Lincoln (D)	U.S. Congresswoman	32
AR	Mark Pryor (D)	AR State Representative	27
CT	Christopher J. Dodd (D)	U.S. Congressman	31
CT	Joseph I. Lieberman (D)	CT State Senator	29
DE	Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D)	New Castle County Councilmember	28
DE	Thomas Richard Carper (D)	DE Treasurer	29
FL	Bob Graham (D)	FL State Representative	31
FL	Bill Nelson (D)	FL State Representative	30
GA	Zell Bryan Miller (D)	Young Harris Mayor	27
HI	Daniel K. Inouye (D)	HI State Representative	30
IA	Charles E. Grassley (R)	IA State Representative	25
IA	Thomas Harkin (D)	U.S. Congressman	35
ID	Larry E. Craig (R)	ID State Senator	29
ID	Michael D. Crapo (R)	ID State Senator	33
IL	Peter G. Fitzgerald (R)	IL State Senator	32
IN	Evan Bayh (D) IN	Secretary of State	31
IN	Richard G. Lugar (R)	Indianapolis School Board Member	32
KY	Mitch McConnell (R)	Jefferson County Judge Executive	35
LA	John B. Breaux (D)	U.S. Congressman	28
LA	Mary L. Landrieu (D)	LA State Representative	24
MA	Edward M. Kennedy (D)	U.S. Senator	30
MD	Barbara A. Mikulski (D)	Baltimore City Councilwoman	35
MD	Paul S. Sarbanes (D)	MD State Assemblyman	33
ME	Olympia Snowe (R)	ME State Representative	26
MI	Debbie Ann Stabenow (D)	Ingham County Commissioner	25
MN	Mark Dayton (DFL)	Commissioner	31

MO	Christopher S. Bond (R)	MO Governor	34
MS	Thad Cochran (R)	U.S. Congressman	35
MS	Trent Lott (R)	U.S. Congressman	31
MT	Max S. Baucus (D)	MT State Representative	32
NH	Judd A. Gregg (R)	U.S. Congressman	34
NH	John E. Sununu (R)	U.S. Congressman	32
NM	Pete V. Domenici (R)	Albuquerque City Commissioner	34
NV	Harry M. Reid (D)	NV Assemblyman	29
NY	Charles E. Schumer (D)	NY Assemblyman	24
OH	Michael DeWine (R)	OH State Senator	33
OH	George V. Voinovich (R)	OH State Representative	31
OK	James M. Inhofe (R)	OK State Representative	32
OK	Don Nickles (R)	OK State Senator	30
OR	Ron Wyden (D)	U.S. Congressman	31
PA	Richard J. Santorum (R)	U.S. Congressman	32
RI	Lincoln D. Chafee (R)	Warwick City Councilman	33
RI	John F. Reed (D)	RI State Senator	35
SC	Ernest F. Hollings (D)	SC Lieutenant Governor	33
SD	Thomas A. Daschle (D)	U.S. Congressman	32
SD	Tim P. Johnson (D)	SD State Representative	33
TX	Kay Bailey Hutchison (R)	TX State Representative	
VA	George Felix Allen (R)	VA State Delegate	31
VT	James M. Jeffords (I)	VT State Senator	33
VT	Patrick J. Leahy (D)	U.S. Senator	34
WA	Maria Cantwell	WA State Representative	28
WA	Patty Murray (D)	School Board	35
WI	Russell D. Feingold (D)	WI State Senator	30
WV	Robert C. Byrd (D)	WV State Delegate	30
WV	John D. Rockefeller IV (D)	WV Secretary of State	32
WY	Michael B. Enzi (R)	Gillette Mayor	31

Members of U.S. House of Representatives

State/Name (Party)	First Elected Office	Age When First Elected
Alabama		
Robert Aderholt (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	31
Spencer Bachus (R)	AL Senate	35
Artur Davis (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
Mike Rogers (R)	AL House of Representatives	28
Alaska		
Donald Young (R)	City Council	27
Arizona		
Trent Franks (R)	AZ House of Representatives	26
Raul Grijalva (R)	School District Governing Board	26
James Kolbe (R)	AZ Senate	34

**California**

Xavier Becerra (D)	CA House of Representatives	32
Howard L. Berman (D)	CA House of Representatives	32
Dennis A. Cardoza (D)	Atwater City Council	25
John Doolittle (R)	CA Senate	30
David T. Dreier (R)	House of Representatives	28
Elton W. Gallegly (R)	City Council	35
Duncan L. Hunter (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	32
Tom Lantos (D)	Millbrae Board of Education	30
Jerry Lewis (R)	School Board	31
Zoe Lofgren (D)	Board of Supervisors	33
Robert T. Matsui (D)	City Council	30
George Miller (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	29
Devin G. Nunes (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	29
Richard W. Pombo (R)	City Council	29
George P. Randanovich (R)	Mariposa County Planning Board	27
Edward R Royce (R)	CA Senate	31
Linda T. Sanchez (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	27
Hilda L. Solis (D)	CA House of Representatives	35
William M Thomas (R)	CA House of Representatives	33
Henry A. Waxman (D)	CA State Assembly	29

Colorado

Diana L. Degette (D)	CO House of Representatives	35
Scott McInnis (R)	CO House of Representatives	30
Thomas G. Tancredo (R)	CO House of Representatives	31

Connecticut

John B. Larson (D)	Board of Education	29
Christopher H. Shays (R)	CT House of Representatives	30

Delaware

Michael N. Castle (R)	DE House of Representatives	27
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Florida

Ander Crenshaw (R)	FL House of Representatives	28
James Davis (D)	FL House of Representatives	31
Peter Deutsch (D)	FL House of Representatives	26
Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R)	FL House of Representatives	32
Mario Diaz-Balart (R)	FL House of Representatives	27
Tom C. Feeney (R)	FL House of Representatives	32
Mark Adam Foley (R)	City Commissioner	23
Ric Keller (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
Kendrick Brett Meek (D)	FL State Representative	28
John L. Mica (R)	FL House of Representatives	34
Adam H. Putnam (R)	FL House of Representatives	22
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R)	FL House of Representatives	31
Robert Wexler (D)	FL Senate	29
C.W. Bill Young (R)	FL Senate	31

Georgia		
Sanford D. Bishop Jr. (D)	GA House of Representatives	30
John H. Isakson (R)	GA House of Representatives	32
Jack Kingston (R)	GA House of Representatives	30
John Linder (R)	GA House of Representatives	33
Idaho		
C.L. Butch Otter (R)	ID House of Representatives	30
Michael K. Simpson (R)	City Council	30
Illinois		
Lane A. Evans (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	32
Luis V. Gutierrez (R)	City Council	33
Jesse Louis Jackson Jr. (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	30
Timothy V. Johnson (R)	City Council	25
John M. Shimkus (R)	Township Trustee	31
Indiana		
Dan L. Burton (R)	IN House of Representatives	29
Stephen E. Buyer (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
Julia M. Carson (D)	IN House of Representatives	34
Baron P. Hill (D)	IN House of Representatives	29
John Nathan Hostettler (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	33
Peter J. Visclosky (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
Iowa		
James A. Leach (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	34
James Allen Nussle (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	30
Kansas		
Dennis Moore (D)	District Attorney	31
Jerry Moran (R)	KS Senate	34
Kentucky		
Kenneth R. Lucas (D)	City Council	34
Edward Whitfield (R)	KY House of Representatives	31
Louisiana		
Richard Hugh Baker (R)	LA House of Representatives	24
William J. Jefferson (D)	LA Senate	33
Christopher John (D)	LA House of Representatives	28
William J. Tauzin (R)	LA House of Representatives	28
David Vitter (R)	LA House of Representatives	31
Maine		
Michael H. Michaud (D)	ME House of Representatives	25
Maryland		
Benjamin L. Cardin (D)	MD House of Delegates	24
Elijah Eugene Cummings (D)	MD House of Delegates	32
Steny H. Hoyer (D)	MD Senate	27
Christopher Van Hollen Jr. (D)	MD House of Delegates	31
Albert Russell Wynn (D)	MD House of Delegates	32



Massachusetts		
Michael E. Capuano (D)	Alderman	25
William D. Delahunt (D)	City Council	30
Barney Frank (D)	MA House of Representatives	33
Edward J Markey (D)	MA House of Representatives	26
Richard E. Neal (D)	City Council	29
John W. Olver (D)	MA House of Representatives	32
Michigan		
David Lee Camp (R)	MI House of Representatives	35
John Conyers Jr. (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
John D. Dingell (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	29
Dale E. Kildee (D)	MI House of Representatives	35
Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D)	MI House of Representatives	33
Sander M. Levin (D)	MI Senate	34
Thaddeus G. McCotter (R)	County Commissioner	27
Michael H. Michaud (D)	ME House of Representatives	25
Candice Miller (R)	ME House of Representatives	25
Mike Rogers (R)	MI Senate	31
Frederick Stephen Upton (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	33
Minnesota		
Gilbert W. Gutknecht (R)	MN House of Representatives	31
Betty McCollum (DFL)	City Council	34
Collin C. Peterson (DFL)	MN Senate	33
James M. Ramstad (R)	MN Senate	34
Martin Olav Sabo (DFL)	MN House of Representatives	23
Mississippi		
Charles W. Pickering Jr. (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	34
Gene Taylor (D)	City Councilmember	28
Bennie G. Thompson (D)	Alderman	21
Missouri		
Roy Blunt (R)	MO Secretary of State	34
William Lacy Clay Jr. (D)	MO House of Representatives	27
Richard Andrew Gephardt (D)	City Council	30
Samuel B. Graves (R)	MO House of Representatives	29
Montana		
Dennis Rehberg (R)	MT House of Representatives	29
Nebraska		
Douglas K. Bereuter (R)	NE Senate	35
Lee R. Terry (R)	City Council	29
Nevada		
Shelley Berkley (D)	NV House of Representatives	31
Jon Christopher Porter Sr. (R)	City Council	28
New Jersey		
Robert E. Andrews (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	33
Michael Ferguson (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	30

E. Scott Garrett (R)	NJ Assembly	30
Robert Menendez (D)	Board of Education	20
Frank G. Pallone Jr. (R)	City Council	31
Stephen R. Rothman (D)	Mayor	31
H. James Saxton (R)	NJ Assembly	32
Christopher H. Smith (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	27
New York		
Joseph Crowley (D)	NY House of Representatives	25
Eliot L. Engel (D)	NY House of Representatives	30
Vito J. Fossella Jr. (R)	City Council	29
Peter T. King (R)	Town Council	34
Jack Quinn (R)	City Council	31
Michael R. McNulty (D)	Mayor	30
Carolyn B. Maloney (D)	City Council	34
Thomas M. Reynolds (R)	City Council	24
Jose E. Serrano (D)	NY House of Representatives	31
Nydia M. Velazquez (D)	City Council	31
James T. Walsh (R)	Common Council	31
Anthony David Weiner (D)	City Council	27
North Carolina		
Frank W. Balance Jr. (D)	NC House of Representatives	31
Bob R. Etheridge (D)	County Commission	32
Robert C. Hayes (R)	City Council	33
Charles H. Taylor (R)	NC House of Representatives	26
North Dakota		
Earl Ralph Pomeroy (D)	ND House of Representatives	29
Ohio		
John A. Boehner (R)	OH House of Representatives	35
Sherrod Brown (D)	City Council	22
Stephen Chabot (R)	City Council	32
Paul E. Gilmore (R)	OH Senate	27
Dennis J. Kucinich (D)	Mayor	31
Robert William Ney (R)	OH House of Representatives	26
Michael G. Oxley (R)	OH House of Representatives	29
Deborah D. Pryce (R)	Municipal Court Judge	34
Timothy J. Ryan (D)	OH Senate	27
Patrick J. Tiberi (R)	OH House of Representatives	29
Michael R. Turner (R)	Municipal Court Judge	34
Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D)	Municipal Court Judge	33
Oklahoma		
Brad Carson (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	33
Ernest J. Istook Jr. (R)	City Council	32
Frank D. Lucas (R)	OK House of Representatives	29

Oregon		
Earl Blumenauer (D)	OR House of Representatives	24
Greg P. Walden (R)	OR House of Representatives	32
Pennsylvania		
Michael F. Doyle Jr. (D)	City Council	24
Philip English (R)	City Controller	?
Chaka Fattah (D)	PA House of Representatives	26
James C. Greenwood (R)	PA House of Representatives	29
Melissa A. Hart (R)	PA Senate	28
Joseph M. Hoeffel (D)	PA House of Representatives	27
Tim Holden (D)	County Sheriff	28
John E. Peterson (R)	City Council	30
Joseph R. Pitts (R)	PA House of Representatives	33
Todd R. Platts (R)	PA House of Representatives	30
Donald Sherwood (R)	School Board	34
W. Curtis Weldon (R)	Mayor	30
Rhode Island		
Patrick Joseph Kennedy (D)	RI House of Representatives	21
James R. Langevin (D)	RI House of Representatives	25
South Carolina		
James Gresham Barrett (R)	SC House of Representatives	35
South Dakota		
William J. Janklow (R)	SD Attorney General	35
Tennessee		
Jim Cooper (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	29
Harold E. Ford Jr. (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	26
Barton Jennings Gordon (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
William Lewis Jenkins (R)	TN House of Representatives	27
John S. Tanner (D)	TN House of Representatives	32
Texas		
Joe Linus Barton (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	35
John A. Culberson (R)	TX House of Representatives	30
Thomas Dale Delay (R)	TX House of Representatives	32
Lloyd A. Doggett (D)	TX Senate	27
Thomas Edwards (D)	TX Senate	32
Raymond Eugene Green (D)	TX State Representatives	25
Ralph Hall (D)	County Judge	27
Ruben E. Hinojosa (D)	Board of Education	34
Solomon Ortiz (D)	County Constable	28
Silvestre Reyes (D)	School Board	24
Ciro D. Rodriguez (D)	School Board	29
Max A. Sandlin Jr. (D)	County Judge	34
Lamar S. Smith (R)	TX House of Representatives	34
James Turner (D)	TX House of Representatives	35



Virginia

Fredrick C. Boucher (D)	VA Senate	28
Virgil H. Goode Jr. (R)	VA Senate	26
James P. Moran Jr. (D)	VA House of Representatives	35
Robert C. Scott (D)	VA House of Representatives	32

Washington

Rick Larsen (D)	City Council	34
James A. McDermott (D)	WA House of Representatives	35
Adam Smith (D)	WA Senate	26

Wisconsin

Tammy Baldwin (D)	County Board	24
Mark A. Green (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	33
Ronald James Kind (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	33
Gerald D. Klaczka (D)	WI Assembly	26
David Ross Obey (D)	WI Assembly	25
Thomas E. Petri (R)	WI Senate	33
Paul D. Ryan (R)	U.S. House of Representatives	28
F. James Sensenbrenner Jr. (R)	WI Assembly	25

West Virginia

Nick Joe Rahall (D)	U.S. House of Representatives	27
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Governors

State	Name (Party)	First Elected Office	Age When First Elected
AL	Robert R. Riley (R)	City Councilman	28
CO	Bill Owens (R)	CO State Representative	32
CT	John G. Rowland (R)	CT State Representative	23
FL	Jeb Bush (R)	FL Commerce Secretary	34
HI	Linda Lingle (R)	Maui County Councilwoman	27
ID	Dirk Kempthorne (R)	Boise Mayor	33
IN	Frank O'Bannon (D)	IN School Board Commissioner	34
MD	Bob Ehrlich (R)	MD State Delegate	30
ME	John A. Baldacci (D)	Bangor City Councilman	23
MN	Tim Pawlenty (R)	Eagan City Councilman	28
MO	Bob Holden (D)	MO State Representative	33
MS	Ronnie Musgrove (D)	MS State Senator	31
NE	Mike Johanns (R)	Lancaster County Commissioner	32
NJ	James S. McGreevey (D)	NJ State Assemblyman	33
NM	Bill Richardson (D)	NM State Representative	35
OH	Bob Taft (R)	OH State Representative	34
OK	Brad Henry (D)	OK State Senator	29
OR	Ted Kulongoski (D)	OR State Representative	34
PA	Ed Rendell (D)	Philadelphia District Attorney	34
SC	Mark Sanford (R)	U.S. State Representative	34
TX	Rick Perry (R)	TX State Representative	34
VT	Jim Douglas (R)	VT State Representative	25
WA	Gary Locke (D)	WA State Representative	32
WV	Robert E. Wise, Jr. (D)	WV State Senator	32



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