Redistricting and the Politics of College Towns

Overview

Belief in self-governance is a principle that UVa students are indoctrinated with from the very beginning of their college careers. It is for that reason that this year we have chosen to take on the issue of “Redistricting and the Politics of College Towns,” with a focus on trying to reform redistricting laws—which limit voter voice—and an additional effort in the beginning of the year to encourage students to exercise their voices through voter registration drives and get-out-the-vote events. Self-governance means active participation—but it also means the ability to meaningfully participate. That is why we will focus on these two issues—redistricting reform and voter participation—side by side.

Events and Initiatives

1. **Reach out**- We’ll be reaching out to all of the political organizations on Grounds to try and secure their support—for the voter participation events as well as our redistricting reform plan. We hope to get endorsements from both of the major party organizations in keeping with the conference’s theme of “Bipartisan Advocacy: Finding Common Ground.” Having additional manpower will make planning and executing our other events possible, while having bipartisan support for our redistricting petition will make it much more attractive when pitching it to the average student—not to mention the state legislature.

2. **Tabling, Tabling, Tabling**- We’ll set up tables at different points throughout the year to either register voters, keep student awareness of the election high, or advocate our petition. Depending on what goal we want to accomplish at that time, this could help us make progress towards any of them.

3. **Vote Captains**- We will recruit “vote captains” from the first year dorms to also assist us in registering students to vote, with some sort of prize going to the first year dorm that has the most students register. Turning this into a competition can only help us increase turnout, and raise excitement among students.

4. **Raise Awareness**- We’ll be submitting or suggesting pieces to the Cavalier Daily and other student publications about the topic of partisan redistricting. Getting the word out could help us to gain student support for our petition, and reach our goal of X signatures that much faster.

Goals

1. Get 1000 number of students registered and pledged to vote-
2. Get 2000 number of signatures on a petition asking the legislature to re-examine redistricting laws. Alternatively—or in addition—write a bill with the help of On-Grounds legislative groups.
3. Get a bill on the floor in the VA state legislature that insulates redistricting from partisan influence.

Collaboration

In terms of the voter participation portion of our project, we will definitely share strategies with other schools that also undertake similar projects. In regards to redistricting, we want to try and get feedback from a variety of ambassadors in states where redistricting laws may differ from those in Virginia. It would be fantastic to get a dialogue going to try and determine what solution best represents the spirit of democracy—and what works.