

Participants in the National Student Issues Convention Chose Climate Change and Health Care As Most Important Issues in Upcoming 2022 Election

More than 250 college and university students from 9 states, who met on March 22, 2021 in an on-line convention, voted "climate change and healthcare" as the two most important political issues for them. The other top issues were in order of voting: criminal justice reform, education, and racism.

After small group Zoom discussions of more than 15 issues, students selected climate change as their top concern.

"In small-group Zoom sessions, the students were given an opportunity to advocate for the issue they deemed most important," said Kate Floros, a Clinical Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "The final top issues and their careful discussion demonstrate the serious commitment of all students to critical issues facing their campuses, states, country, and the world."

"The Covid-19 pandemic dictated that the National Student Issues Convention be conducted over the internet via Zoom," said Anthony Perry, a Political Science Instructor at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Michigan, a lead organizer of the Convention. "When the Convention was called to order, we began with all the students and faculty advisors linked in one live Zoom session," Perry said. "We then broke into 12 separate small group sessions and then, after 45 minutes of group discussion among the students, regrouped again in a General Assembly session," he added.

For the first time, ranked choice voting was used to determine the students' top 5 issues. Ranked Choice Voting is deployed in an increasing number of elections, including the most recent mayoral election in New York City. Students ranked the issues in order of importance to them, and the issues with the most consensus rose to the top. "This was a great addition to Convention because students whose favored issue was less popular still contributed to which five issues eventually won. No one's votes were 'wasted'," Floros said.

Once selected, student issues were then addressed directly by Illinois State Representative Theresa Mah (HD-002) and Wayne County Commissioner David Knezek who is

a former Michigan State Senator and former Member of the Michigan House of Representatives. Both officials promised to promote the student concerns in their states. They also coached students on how to have a political impact on the issues they cared most about.

Participating Colleges and Universities:

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California: California State University, Sacramento, Young-Im Lee, Youngim.lee@csu.edu

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- Truman Community College, Chicago, Kelly O'Malley, komalley@ccc.edu

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- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- University of Michigan, Dearborn
- Wayne State University, Detroit, Barbara Jones, barbaraljones@wayne.edu

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Ohio: Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, (near Toledo), David Jackson, Jacksonod@bgsu.edu

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