

Organize a Political Debate or Discussion on Your College Campus

It is not unusual to read an article or hear a news report about 18 to 24 year olds having a lack of interest in politics and government. However, when you speak to college students, they express frustration at the lack of interest elected officials have in them and their issues. There is a lack of communication between the two groups, and both seem unsure of how to begin a dialogue.

Any student group on a college campus can organize and host candidates for local, state, and federal offices, as well as current elected officials. All it takes is issuing an invitation to these individuals – in most cases, these officials and candidates are thrilled to have the opportunity to speak with a group of interested citizens. Take the first step and begin a discussion with these officials about issues that are important to you and your college community.

WHO?

Determine who your audience will be and what issues they would be interested in learning more about. Is there a local ordinance that will affect your college campus? Did a State Senator or Representative sponsor a bill that affects 18 to 24 year olds that students would like to speak with the official about?

Invite U.S. Congressional members, State Assembly members, State-wide elected officials, and City or County officials to take part in a discussion with students or invite candidates for office to debate each other about issues that are important to your student body.

WHAT?

Invite elected officials or candidates for office to speak about an issue that would interest your fellow students, such as student loans, crime, or the minimum wage. Ask them to explain why they support particular bills or why they feel strongly about an issue.

WHEN?

The most effective time to meet with State officials is in the late spring or late fall. The Georgia General Assembly meets during January, February and March, but it might be interesting to organize a group to visit a state official's Atlanta office.

Many U.S. Senators and Representatives spend Mondays, Fridays and legislative recesses in their district.

Local officials have much more flexibility with their schedules. Be sure to contact all individuals you would like to invite far in advance.

WHERE?

Use locations on or around your college campus that are popular with students. Reserve a meeting room that would be large enough for your group. Consider using a private dining room in a local restaurant, a classroom, or an advisor's home.

WHY?

There is never a better time to begin a relationship between constituents and their elected officials or political candidates – especially if the constituents are between the ages of 18 and 24. Eighteen to 24 year olds often complain that candidates and elected officials don't pay attention to them and their issues – and officials complain that young people don't participate in the political process. For this reason, it is important for you to let them know that you are interested in their platforms and issues. Invite candidates and officials to your campus so that the dialogue can begin.