



## Committee of Seventy

Join us in our campaign for better government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### What Apathetic Young Voters? Committee of Seventy's High School Election Ambassador Program Grows by 50%

**(Philadelphia, PA)** More than 950 high-school students from 22 high schools in Philadelphia and Montgomery County are participating in Committee of Seventy's expanded Election Ambassador Corps trainings this spring. That's more than a 50% increase from the number who participated last fall. The students prepared to serve as Election Ambassadors more than 1,000 polling places near their homes on Pennsylvania's Primary Day, April 26.

After the election Seventy will field the Election Innovation Challenge, a competition that provides high-school students a platform to work in small groups and creatively suggest ways in which the voting process can be improved in Philadelphia. The Challenge will be open to every high school student in the five-county Philadelphia region.

The goal of Seventy's innovative service learning project, now in its second year, is to instill a lifelong interest in civic engagement in teenagers. It's Seventy's response to the growing concern about the alarmingly low voter participation rates among our youngest voters – 12% of voters 18-34 participated in Philadelphia's May 2015 Mayoral Primary.

The programs consist of six main elements:

1. Students trained by Seventy's staff will **visit polling places in teams to answer FAQs about the voting process** (IDs voters might need, provisional ballots, assistance for disabled voters, etc.). More complicated matters will be referred to Seventy staff.
2. Students will administer a nonpartisan **exit-poll survey**, gathering informative data concerning voters' opinions on such potential election reform issues as optional vote-by-mail, nonpartisan redistricting and youth preregistration. One question asked on Primary Day 2015 revealed that 66% of the respondents favored online voter registration, which the PA Department of State implemented in August.
3. Students will **collect sample ballots distributed by campaign canvassers outside polling places**, with copies to be shared with other fair election advocates, the media and the Philadelphia Board of Ethics.
4. Students are encouraged to participate in a "**candidate selfie contest**" in which they identify and take selfies of themselves with candidates who show up at the polling places to which they have been assigned.
5. Students can also take part in a **GOTV social media contest** by submitting memes to encourage eligible voters to vote. Winning proposals will be shared via Seventy's Twitter feed, Facebook page, and website, [www.seventy.org](http://www.seventy.org).
6. Following Election Day, *all high-school students in the Philadelphia region* will be encouraged to participate in the **Election Innovation Challenge**, a competition that provides students a platform to work in small groups and creatively suggest---in written essays, on video or in Power Point or Prezi presentations---ways in which the voting process can be improved in Philadelphia. Last year, 60 students participated in teams on the Challenge. Topics ranged from voting rights for felons to campaign finance reform. The winners received a VIP lunch and a behind-the-scenes tour of City Hall.



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Students from the following schools are participating in the April 26 primary:

- [Bodine High School for International Affairs](#), Philadelphia
- [George Washington Carver Engineering and Science High School](#), Philadelphia
- [Central High School](#), Philadelphia
- [Constitution High School](#), Philadelphia
- [KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy](#), Philadelphia
- [Abraham Lincoln High School](#), Philadelphia
- [Lower Merion High School](#), Ardmore, PA
- [Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School](#), Philadelphia
- [Mastery Charter School, Simon Gratz Campus](#), Philadelphia
- [Mastery Charter School, Lenfest Campus](#), Philadelphia
- [New Foundations Charter School](#), Philadelphia
- [Northeast High School](#), Philadelphia
- [Parkway Center City High School](#), Philadelphia
- [Pennsylvania School for the Deaf](#), Philadelphia
- [Paul Robeson High School for Human Services](#), Philadelphia
- [Philadelphia Military Academy](#), Philadelphia
- [Philadelphia Electrical and Technology Charter High School](#), Philadelphia
- [Science Leadership Academy at Beeber](#), Philadelphia
- [Science Leadership Academy](#) (Center City Campus), Philadelphia
- [Springside Chestnut Hill Academy](#), Philadelphia
- [String Theory School](#), Philadelphia
- [West Philadelphia High School](#), Philadelphia

"Young people today certainly are interested in public life. They volunteer, they're educated on current events, but still the majority of young folks don't vote. We have great hopes for the Corps—a similar effort in Chicago recruits 4,000 high school students every year to assist voters at the polls—and we think the Corps can really help develop the next generation of super-voters and super-citizens," said David Thornburgh, CEO, Committee of Seventy.

Ms. Charlene Gottman, a Social Studies teacher at Bodine High, said "Students enjoyed the training session, and I could see that they got to apply some of the things we've learned about voting. The Election Ambassador program really makes learning come alive."

Students learn about election rules and regulations in the classroom, and Seventy trains them to help voters with general voting information issues as well as how to use alternative and provisional ballots, access language assistance resources, and access resources for disabled and visually impaired voters.

"I didn't expect for this to be such an exciting experience, but I've learned so much. Even though I can't vote yet, I can still make a difference regarding the process. I'm pumped to go out on Election Day and support voters and pass on some of the things I've learned!" Crystal Collazo-Deleon, a junior at Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School.

According to a study conducted in 2011 by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, a nonprofit public policy, research and technical assistance organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., youth civic engagement leads to increased success in school and greater civic participation later in life along with a decrease in risky behavior.

The Election Ambassadors program and the Election Innovation Challenge have been made possible in part due to a generous grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation.

### **About the Committee of Seventy**

The Committee of Seventy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization who aims to protect and improve the voting process, encourage honest, capable people to seek public office, and help them make government work better; and engage citizens in the process of making important decisions about our future. In other words, Seventy advocates for better politics, better government, a better Philadelphia and a better Pennsylvania.