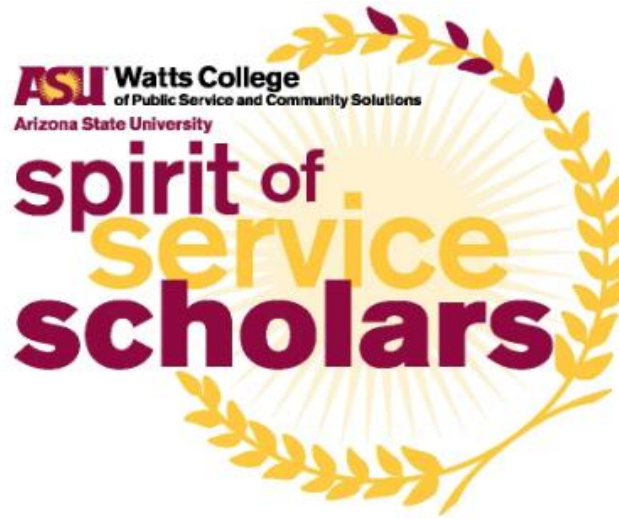


Voting and Elections in Arizona

SPIRIT OF SERVICE SCHOLARS FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALL

February 23, 2024 – Phoenix, AZ



I WILL...

Commit to voting in the primaries, despite
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ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY

In an effective democracy, ideas are bipartisan and represent everyone's needs, including independents. People feel that they can participate and that their participation and voice matters. An effective democracy is representative of all people with elected leaders who represent the entire community and civic action by people that is broader than just voting.

An effective democracy creates policies with well-informed decisions that are based on credible information—not misleading propaganda. People are well-informed and their needs are met with adaptive and innovative systems that incorporate the needs of all people, including different generations.

When our Democracy is working well, the right things get done.

CURRENT POLITICAL AND CIVIC SYSTEMS

There is a lot of distrust of our current democracy, especially among our youth. People also feel intimidated by a system that is difficult to navigate and that often makes them feel that their participation does not matter.

To address this, we should look at misleading information that is spread online as well as how to reduce the impact of money's influence on politics, specifically the impact of lobbying by corporate interests on those who run for or hold office. Arizona's Clean Elections system is one effort to address this issue and it has had some success but has also had many challenges--including by those who claim it impinges on free speech rights if you place limits on campaign contributions.

Notably, the ability to raise money is not always tied to the most effective candidate. While we need reforms to address the influence of money on politics, it is a challenging problem to address with many tensions to balance and unintended consequences. Nonetheless, our efforts and the efforts of other countries demonstrate that we can make positive changes and it is important to keep trying.

CHANGES TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

To make our democracy more effective, there should be more opportunities for people to communicate with elected leaders outside of the current "request to speak" system which is fairly limited in scope and timing. This could include an online forum, community liaisons, community centers and other opportunities at community gathering spots that are more accessible to the average person who works full-time or may have other limitations on participation.

We also need to eliminate barriers that independents face in voting.

Finally, we should consider additional incentives for candidates to "run clean."

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Spirit of Service Scholars Future Leaders Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Communicate to others what I have learned and provide them resources and places to gain more knowledge or information to get actively involved.
- Spread the word that Independents can vote in the primary election and help them work through the process.
- Commit to voting in the primaries, despite being an independent voter.
- Use my platform as a student leader to highlight opportunities for civic engagement outside of traditional voting.
- Use my voice in the primary elections and learn how to tackle hurdles for independent voters.
- Engage others.
- Raise awareness with my peers on these topics and what their processes look like.
- Work with my community to help bring solvency to the ongoing detriments that our society faces. Do my best to do this with an open mind and a heart for hope to help those in need and those to come!
- Attempt to be more knowledgeable of voting policies and regulations and how it affects my community.
- Utilize the RTS system and spread the word to my peers about how to use it.
- Educate people about the power of voting.
- Request to speak and be civically engaged.
- Learn how to engage my community at the micro, mezzo, and macro level.