

Brandon Maly: Advice to Republican debate participants: Connect with young voters

Posted on Wednesday, Aug 16, 2023

As we near the August 23rd Republican Presidential Primary debate in Milwaukee, there have been numerous stories in national and statewide publications on young voters trending Democrat in recent elections. As Politico noted “college towns are decimating the GOP.” In Wisconsin, students have been mobilizing and voting in exceedingly greater numbers on UW campuses. In 2022, youth voter turnout in Wisconsin was double the national average.

Wisconsin is a tipping-point to winning back the Senate and White House. Any Republican politician, pundit, or political analyst that thinks 18-24 year-olds are souring on President Biden better think again. The Democrat turnout machine on targeted campuses in swing states such as UW Madison nullifies much of that sentiment. Republican presidential candidates cannot rest on having an unpopular incumbent, they must give younger voters affirmative reasons to support them and then chase the votes.

Many younger voters share Republican values and just don't know it. As a young voter myself, I am hopeful that candidates participating in the debate will consider the following when sharing their positions:

Social Media

Young America's Foundation President Scott Walker articulated the problem best, “We are overlooking ways to communicate to young people.” Social media is the new virtual “town square,” as Elon Musk put it. When Republicans don't engage, it gets monopolized by the left. The benefit of using TikTok, considered a controversial app, and other platforms, is that once young adults engage with some of our messaging, a positive feedback loop is created. We risk losing young voters if we suggest banning TikTok and other apps. Moving forward, candidates can no longer afford to leave these tools on the table.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

How would your administration balance protecting national security, minimizing government intervention, and allowing us to use our preferred apps?

The Economy

Every generation in American history has been better suited to achieve the American Dream than the previous generation. This uniquely American phenomena has ceased to be the case for my generation. Progressives have the false but attractive promise of handouts and economic equality.

How do you counter this message?

Climate

Gen Z considers climate change to be a top issue. Don't avoid the topic – this is a messaging war. Democrats are in favor of importing oil from dictatorships abroad while costing us jobs at home.

What would energy policy look like in your administration? Would it include an investment in nuclear energy?

Advice to the Candidates

- Don't talk down to us. Articulate that you are genuinely interested in and would appreciate our votes.
- Be practical. For example, abolishing the Department of Education alone will not cure the indoctrination that is very real in the lives of American youth.
- Get us motivated to vote. Talk about college athletes getting paid, affordable education, and making car ownership more attainable.

Every candidate should message to young voters and reclaim the social media space. Candidates' willingness to address these questions will determine Republicans' success in the next election. Democrats should not be given a free pass in continuing their monopoly on young voters.

— *Brandon Maly is chair of the Republican Party of Dane County (608) 709-0478*