

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)



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# Rock the Vote fails to promote importance of informed voting

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Rock the Vote wants to register two million young people to vote in the November election.

This would be great, except that Rock the Vote won't be doing anything to encourage the education of its newly registered voters. Instead, almost all the information these young people base their votes on will come from opponent-bashing television commercials and "The Daily Show."

According to rockthevote.com, the organization's mission "is to engage and build the political power of young people in order to achieve progressive change in our country." Rock the Vote promotes making youth voices heard on the issues that affect them, and I applaud that. But that's really as far as it goes. The organization excels at driving youths to the polls while falling short of actually educating its targeted demographic.

Rockthevote.com has plenty of information: program goals for 2008, an "About Rock the Vote" section, links to data on youth voters, a history of the organization and a list of issues to consider when voting. But the site doesn't tell you where major candidates stand on those issues or what kinds of potential legislation voters will have input on. And it doesn't tell you where you can research any of this, nor does it even acknowledge that you should take the time to do so.

While I was at the Democratic National Convention in Denver on Monday night, I found five girls handing out information about Rock the Vote. I asked what steps the organization takes to educate voters, or at least to encourage them to do their own research on issues and candidates. The girls couldn't answer me. Instead, they talked in circles about the importance of making our voices heard. They told me Rock the Vote is a bipartisan organization and about how rough the terrain becomes when you start trying to educate voters from that position.

Truth: They were high school students keenly advocating a cause. One of them said she couldn't even vote in this election. I probably should have gone a little easier on them, but I pushed them to consider what Rock the Vote leaves out, and I hope they take that to heart. Maybe instead of just pressing brochures on

pedestrians outside Foot Locker, they'll tell people to research what will appear on the ballot.

During the summer, I interned with three radio stations in Kansas City that support Rock the Vote. I recently mentioned to my internship supervisor how upset I was about the lack of information the program offers. She told me she'd spent an entire day trying to learn what issues will be on the ballot in November, and it was almost impossible to find anything about them. The closest she came to a complete list of what Mission, Kan., voters will see in November was a copy of the 2004 ballot.

Democracy isn't easy. Apparently being an educated voter takes some real work on the voter's part. But if we're given a say in who leads us and makes decisions that will affect us, by all means we should take advantage of that. I don't know yet how I will vote in a little more than two months, but I hope our next president is elected because the majority of voters thinks he will best serve the United States of America. Sure, Obama is really, really ridiculously good-looking, but where does he stand on the issues that matter to you? Don't belittle my vote by basing yours on sexiness.

Voters who want to do research have some work ahead of them. The information we need is buried deep in less-than-trustworthy Wikipedia articles and biased news stories, or else behind six levels of jersey-barricades and the Secret Service at the national conventions. The extra effort it takes to uncover the facts will pay off when you go to the polls in November.

By the way, if you want to vote based on what Jon Stewart tells you, I might not be as disappointed as you'd think - at least he's making decently reliable information available to the public.

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