



Civic Engagement

And Our State Student Councils

"What is our responsibility and how do we fulfill it?"

Michael Hagan, MASC President 2010-2011

Student Councils at every level have a responsibility to promote youth involvement in their government...

What does this mean? Well, part of leadership is citizenship, and part of citizenship is being engaged in one's government. This can come at different degrees, from simply voting all the way to organizing a full-scale campaign to push for one's views. If we are trying to develop quality leaders, we must also strive to develop quality citizens.

So what do we do?

State Student Councils in Region 2 already take some measures to increase youth involvement and efficacy when it comes to government. Examples...

- PASC has an annual event where students visit the state capital in Harrisburg and are given the chance to participate in the legislative process
- Every year, MASC takes positions on a number of youth related bills in the Maryland General Assembly and coordinates student run lobbying efforts to communicate these positions to state legislators.

If this is a priority for student councils, how else can we become involved/promote involvement in government?

Each state association can set its own goals when it comes to civic engagement. This kind of action really must reflect an association's mission and goals.

If we do make civic engagement a priority though, there are many possible steps a state association can take to act on it...

- Organize an event where your state student council meets, observes, and maybe even participates in your state government for a day.
- As groups naturally representative of the student population, we can take positions on issues and communicate such positions to lawmakers.
- Make voter registration a student council priority in your state! Encourage school student councils to organize voter registration drives for of-age upperclassmen, and recognize successful efforts at your state events.
- Make information and resources available to students in your state on youth related issues and encourage them to be their own representatives.

There are countless ways to boost civic engagement. Find the ways that work best for your state, and help youth find their voice!