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### Organizers of National Voter Registration Day Promote Importance of Voting in Off Years

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**CAMPUS NEWS**

# Organizers of National Voter Registration Day Promote Importance of Voting in Off Years

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2021



## Gardner-Webb Students and Political Science Associate Professor Give Reasons to Vote in Local Races

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Voter turnout in 2020 was the highest of the 21st century, according to Census.gov, with 66.8 percent of citizens 18 years and older voting. On the Gardner-Webb University campus, voter registration was emphasized, and the football team led the way with 100 percent of the roster registering to vote. However, 2021 is an off-year election and voters are less enthusiastic when it comes to voting in local races.

Several groups work to improve turnout in off years, such as the organizers of National Voter Registration Day (<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>), celebrated on the fourth Tuesday of September, held on Sept. 28 this year. Since it was first observed in 2012, nearly 4.5 million voters have been registered to vote. Still, according to U.S. Census data from 2020, as many as one in four eligible Americans are not registered to vote. Additionally, less than 60 percent of potential voters ages 18-24 reported being registered to vote.



▲ Dr. Elizabeth Amato

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Dr. Elizabeth Amato, Gardner-Webb University associate professor of political science, encourages students to vote in all elections, especially their local ones. “The people who serve in your local offices have a greater impact on your everyday life than the president,” she noted. “Moreover, you have a greater responsibility for your local community, because it is the community closest to you. While there are over 300 million Americans who have a responsibility for deciding who the president will be, in your local community, there’s maybe just a few several thousand citizens. On the local level, you can see the effects of your local government easily. You can know the people who work in it and who serve you.”



▲ James Williams

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Also active on Gardner-Webb’s campus are chapters of the College Democrats and College Republicans. James Williams, ’23, of Fayetteville, N.C., is the vice president of the College Republicans, and Emily Cox, ’24, of Denver, N.C., is president of the College Democrats.

Williams, an exercise science major with a concentration in health fitness, said along with voting, people need to know the issues and where the candidates stand. “It is important to be an informed citizen because every law or policy that is made involves and affects everyone,” he stated. “Those who

are running for different positions in office during off-year elections still have a strong input into the process of making laws, enforcing law and interpreting laws.”



▲ Emily Cox

Cox, a double-major in English and political science, added that local officials dictate property taxes, school funding, law enforcement, educational curriculums, and many other policies. “High voter turnout is essential to keeping a healthy democracy,” she asserted. “As members of political communities, it is our civic duty to make sure our country is governed by elected officials that represent the population as a whole. By being an informed citizen and going out to vote in off-year elections, we can continue to fulfill our civic responsibilities and make sure that our voices are heard.”

She further observed, “Every voting citizen influences what happens in our country. These people are the driving force of our government. Voters are the heart of democracy.”

**Learn how you can register to vote.** 

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*

