

Operation Youth to the Booth-CA-27 Joey Klascius 11/19 MWD Meeting

Hi all, thank you so much for inviting me to present our Antelope Valley youth outreach plans at your meeting! I am proud to be a volunteer leader of AV Democrats for Change and Indivisible AV, and we are so appreciative of the partnership both organizations have with Making Waves for Democracy and so many of you who volunteer with us (and who have been volunteering in the Antelope Valley and CA27 for so many years!)

Some of you may know me but for those who don't I want to share a little bit about who I am and why I do this work. I am a 27-year old bi transgender man who grew up in the Antelope Valley being represented by Republicans at every level of government who voted against working families like mine. My experiences being raised in a low-income household, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and seeing racial injustice and inequity firsthand led to my passion for preserving and expanding the government social safety net and protections for marginalized groups.

I grew up in East Palmdale and looking back at my childhood now, I see how the issues voters talk to us about while canvassing relate to the real life I experienced:

- The mistrust of the police: I was 12, playing cops and robbers with my brothers and neighbors on our bikes, when I witnessed my 15 year old Latino neighbor shot by an officer because he was the robber and was holding a toy gun (he is okay).
- Jobs & low wages: My dad was a mechanic and my mom a stay-at-home mom taking care of my and my 3 siblings. He barely made enough to scrape by and my family survived with free school breakfast & lunch, soup kitchens, & if there was no soup kitchen that day then pb&j's. They didn't even know about food stamps until I was 8 and even then it was so complicated it took a year for them to go through the application process and be approved. Most of our neighbors and friends were facing similar struggles as they worked multiple jobs to provide for their families.
- Lack of opportunity/support: With few jobs or low wage jobs, or working parents not home to supervise their teenagers, gangs and drug-dealing was normal in my neighborhood. We even had a drive-by shooting 2 doors down from my house when I was 14.
- Accessible and affordable healthcare: My dad's job didn't provide benefits or healthcare so when he had a stroke at work 8 years ago, instead of going to the doctor, he went home to sleep it off and hoped it was nothing. He woke up permanently partially paralyzed and has been on a recovery journey since then. The reason he wasn't on Obamacare? He didn't understand the process to apply, and couldn't afford to take off work to figure it out.

And that's why the top 3 issues we consistently hear from voters in the AV are Jobs/Economy, Education, and Healthcare. I know many of you relate and so it's not hard to understand why people in the Antelope Valley, and all over the country, don't pay attention to the news or politics and why they don't vote. There are so many issues they are dealing with in their daily life, and the direct connection between voting and the policies that are implemented and affect them isn't obvious. I am dedicated to helping make that connection for voters.

I have been a campaign organizer for 5+ years, organizing for Democrats like Katie Hill, Loraine Lundquist, Jessica Cisneros in TX, Kipp Mueller, Christy Smith, local Antelope Valley candidates, and more. Candidates who put people over profit, who show up for their community, and whose values align with improving the lives of regular people. The Antelope Valley is my home and I will never stop fighting for the people here to receive the representation and resources they need and deserve. That is why I am part of local organizations in the AV that are dedicated to year-round organizing to engage, register, inform, and turn out Democratic voters, specifically our youth and Black & Latino communities.

As we all know, the youth are so important, they are our future. And when they are empowered they become lifelong voters, volunteers, campaign and government staff, candidates, elected officials, and decision-makers. Last year only 19% of voters in the AV aged 18-29 voted, compared to voters in that same age bracket in Santa Clarita Valley, who had a 35% turnout rate. Indivisible AV's Operation Youth to the Booth 🗳️ aims to not only close that gap but surpass it by equipping high school juniors and seniors, college students, and non-student youth with the tools, knowledge, and inspiration to become active participants in the democratic process. Our flagship program will reach youth where partisan campaigns, candidates, and clubs cannot - in the schools. Starting in January 2024, we will be teaching an adjusted, interactive Rock the Vote curriculum (developed by MWD volunteers!) that focuses on the importance and impact of voting in junior and senior classes in targeted High Schools in the AV, as well as in classes at Antelope Valley College. Student and youth volunteers of Operation Youth to the Booth will be providing input and feedback on the curriculum and will partner with volunteers to present the curriculum in classes. Also, by pairing youth-focused communication methods like digital outreach (through TikTok, Instagram, & Youtube) and texting with traditional grassroots strategies targeting youth such as canvassing, tabling, and hosting community events, we plan on extending beyond school boundaries. This multifaceted outreach approach ensures that non-student youth in the Antelope Valley region are empowered with knowledge, resources, and opportunities to actively participate in the democratic process as well. We're very excited to engage with AV youth in a layered, continuous way that has never been done before here.

We would love for you to help, and we have so many ways to get involved!

We need both remote and in-person volunteers for:

- 🗣️ Classroom Presentations in AV classes
- 📄 Voter Registration tabling at AV College
- 📅 Canvassing youth in the AV
- 📱 Texting youth in the AV
- 📧 Social Media Ambassadors remotely
- 👤 Admin Captains remotely
- 📞 Call Captain remotely
- 👉 Outreach Captains remotely
- 💡 Training Captains remotely
- 💰 Donations remotely

Operation Youth to the Booth 🗳️ will have a lasting impact, and not just for this upcoming election cycle or just at the congressional level. I'm happy to answer any questions!

Links:

Operation Youth to the Booth 🗳️ Program Description: <https://bit.ly/OperationYB>

Volunteer sign up form: <https://forms.gle/RqtgcdqvyMMbP9bZA>