



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 5, 2018

Therapy Dogs Used in Voter Registration Campaign on College Campuses

In an effort to attract snowflake college students to the polls, one voter organization has opted to utilize therapy dogs to entice students to register to vote.

According to the Associated Press, NextGen America, founded by billionaire activist Tom Steyer, is investing more than \$30 million in a voter engagement effort to get more young Democrats to the polls during this year's midterm elections. The organization is targeting college students in states such as Wisconsin, Virginia, California, and North Carolina, where congressional races are highly competitive.



"We're trying really hard to have this be much more of an infrastructure, organizational thing than a two-month campaign," NextGen founder Tom Steyer told the AP. "We're trying to get the broadest possible democracy, the biggest representation."

NextGen believes that therapy dogs are just the trick to get students interested in voter registration and has rolled out its "Pups to the Polls" campaign at the University of Wisconsin Madison, which has already built a reputation for coddling millennials with its "safe space" policies. As part of the campaign, students returning to the University of Wisconsin Madison are being greeted by therapy dogs for petting, and are then being asked to register to vote.

This is not the first time this group has resorted to such tactics. During the 2016 presidential race, NextGen Climate organized an effort to bring dogs to the voters in Iowa, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and New Hampshire, according to *People* magazine. They argued that the campaign could increase voter turnout while also reducing stress.

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"We want every young voter to make it to the polls by Election Day, so we've enlisted our most loyal companions to help during this historic election," said Nick Ellis, the group's National Puppy Coordinator.

And while NextGen claims that their campaign is non-partisan, the group had no qualms about admitting to its agenda in a 2016 digital ad. "It shouldn't take cute pups to get you to the polls," read a [digital ad](#) from NextGen Pennsylvania. "But we'll have some with us anyways! STOP TRUMP and pet cute pups!"

Additionally, Steyer has been funding the impeachment drive against President Trump, which includes a 30-city tour of town hall meetings, national TV ads, and legal aid to immigrants whose families were separated. According to Steyer, Trump "breaks the law daily and has a disrespect for the Constitution and the rule of law."



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It's not hard to see what is motivating NextGen's voter registration campaign.

For this year's registration campaign, NextGen has approximately 800 organizers spread out across more than 400 campuses in Wisconsin, Arizona, California, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

In just the state of Wisconsin, there are 27 full-time workers and 40 student fellows registering voters across 26 campuses. Wisconsin is home to two closely watched races, one in which Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin faces GOP state Senator Leah Vukmir. The other key race is the gubernatorial one, with Gov. Scott Walker facing a challenge from Democratic state schools chief Tony Evers. The polls show both races are tight.

Whether this will amount to bringing more students to the polls come election time is another story, however. As observed by the Daily Wire, just 50 percent of registered millennial voters plan to take part in the mid-year election. The Associated Press reports that while Generation X, millennials, and post-millennials (those between the ages of 18 and 21) make up the majority of voting-eligible adults nationwide, they are not expected to cast the most votes in November. In fact, in 2014, they cast 21 million less votes than voters over the age of 54.

Republicans in Wisconsin do not believe that such drastic measures need to be taken in order to entice invested young people to the polls, however.

"Wisconsin Republicans win by connecting with voters directly where they are — and young voters are no different when it comes to that strategy," said Wisconsin Republican Party spokesman Alec Zimmerman.

Critics view the need to use therapy dogs to entice young people to vote as a sad sign of the times. Students should care enough about politics to register to vote without having to first be drawn in by the innocuous presence of adorable pups. Likewise, they should not require stress relief measures in order to enter into the political arena.

The *Western Journal*, for example, blames the "safe space" phenomenon and the "liberal dogma ... force-fed by academia and the media" for the snowflake culture that compels groups such as NextGen to resort to such childish measures in order to broach the subject of voting and politics among college students.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has accused schools of cracking down on First Amendment rights and preventing "genuine debate" through their use of "safe spaces" and therapy animals.

Sessions says schools are doing "everything they can to create a generation of sanctimonious, sensitive, supercilious snowflakes." He called it a "disservice" to the students and nation alike.



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