



Youth Transitioning Into Adulthood

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NOTES FROM “Let’s Talk Thursdays” via Zoom – August 6, 2020, hosted by Mary E. Valdez, YTIA Co-Founder.

Guest Presenter: **Selene Gomez, National Outreach Director for VoteRiders.** Our topic was “Registering to Vote and Voting”. Below are highlights from Ms. Gomez’ presentation.

Ms. Gomez shared that she became interested in voting and politics while in college. When she was attending Texas A&M University she became a little more activist in order to assist friends at school.

She said that she had worked with Mi Familia Vota for about 4 years before becoming National Outreach Coordinator for Vote Riders, whose goal is to encourage voter registration and to ensure the ability to vote by assisting people with obtaining necessary identification and even offering rides or other assistance as needed.

She noted that youths in foster care are affected by policies that are passed in the Texas legislature so youths need to be advocates, and more vocal about the issues that affect them.

A person must be registered to vote 30 days ahead of an election. So, in a year like this one, a person cannot wait too long before starting the process. While one cannot register on-line, one can get information and begin the process by going to Vote411.org: <https://www.vote411.org/texas>, a site hosted by the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan group; or by going to RocktheVote: <https://www.rockthevote.org/> to get the voter registration form, print it and mail it in. At Register to Vote: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/> a person can pre-fill the form online, and then a voter registration “application” is mailed to the voter for signature, along with a postage-paid envelope to send the signed form in for processing. The public library has voter registration cards, as does the post office; the forms available at these entities simply require completion and signature, folding in half and mailing (postage is pre-paid!). The actual Voter Registration Card will be mailed to the voter (they are usually blue, orange, or yellow cards, depending on the year).

If a person wants more information about a candidate or who is on the ballot, Vote411.org can provide that information. Their site contains printable ballots. Vote411.org also provides Voter Guides, which provide information about the candidates, based upon their answers to several questions. There is also information about upcoming debates between candidates. Another source of information, especially for younger voters can be found on MoveTexas: <https://movetexas.org/>, a non-partisan group with information about issues that affect younger Texans. Look for useful information starting around October 13, 2020.

Be reminded that it is permissible to take the printed ballot to the polls but not a photograph (phones cannot be used, except in dire emergencies at polling places; and if used in a dire emergency the ballot will likely have to be voided and re-started later). In order to vote, a person must be registered AND must have identification (an expired driver license can be used for up to 4 years, as long as the person is registered to vote). NOTE: right now, because of COVID, the Department of Motor Vehicles is backlogged so if you need an ID or license, get the process started right away.

Some people are voting by mail, which is allowed. This year, in Bexar County, a voter can go to ANY polling place to vote. And, early voting will begin October 13, 2020, much earlier than usual by order of Governor Abbott.

Remember, voting is not just about electing candidates on a national level but at all levels of government: municipal, county, State, national. *Elected officials serve the people, not vice versa; they are “public servants” so we must hold them accountable by voting them in, or out, of office.* Young people need to get their voices heard; they need to speak out because politicians do listen, especially if it looks like their office is being challenged. Verbal and written opinions matter; so calls, postcards, letters, and emails can go a long way in influencing an issue, or candidate.

VoteRiders can help with registration and other matters. They can be reached at <https://www.voteriders.org/>, or via call or text to their helpline: 844-338-8743. Or, even directly to Selene Gomez at 210-723-7113. VoteRiders is here to help!

YTIA REMINDER: Stay safe, stay home, be extra vigilant, be mindful of others; wash hands often, wear a mask! *If any youth needs a mask, call YTIA so that we can send you one.*

FINAL WORD: Don't forget to REGISTER TO VOTE when you turn 18! And, be sure to complete the CENSUS.

YTIA says: Your Vote is Your Voice!