



# Discussion Topic

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A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

## QUESTIONS

1. How can your community action group help get more young people get involved in the political process? Is one sponsorship enough?
2. Why do you think young people tend to be so apathetic toward the nation's political process? How can you change that?
3. How can you convince someone today that their vote is important and really makes a difference?

## Down with voter apathy!

If you believe voter apathy and apolitical attitudes are detrimental to the United States, here's your chance to do something about it.

For a mere \$250, you can send a high school junior or senior to Michigan Farm Bureau's Young People's Citizenship Seminar (YPCS). Odds are, they'll come back as a participant in the political process, even if it means only that they'll vote in the next election.

It's a start.

"Most of the students are apathetic about politics coming into the YPCS week," said Megan Ritter, YPCS chair for the last two years. "They're not really impressed by politics, and they're not convinced that their votes count. They may have trouble believing politics affects their lives. But even if they're apathetic about the process, they still have strong opinions about the direction of the country. We take those opinions and try to get the young people to use them as they participate in the political process. Sometimes, they're having so much fun at YPCS that they don't even know they're being engaged in the process."

Along with inspirational speakers, seminars and fun activities such as dances, the students hold mock elections to a variety of political offices. Candidates run campaigns, develop platforms, vote in primary and general elections and generally exhaust themselves with everything that's taking place, all under strict supervision under the cloistered atmosphere of Alma College.

The program has been wildly successful in replacing apathy with interest over the years, but more needs to be done, Ritter said.

"We had 180 students there last year from all over the state," she said. "But our goal this year is to get 250 students there. We're looking for participants right now, so we'd like all our members to encourage a young person to participate."

County Farm Bureaus have been the largest source of support for the program through county sponsorships, but students also can participate through sponsorships offered by local businesses or individual contributions.

Deadline for registration for the 2007 YPCS is April 27.