

# [***Creators Are Rallying For The Midterms But Getting Political Isn t On The Agenda***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:66S6-GH71-JBCM-F19H-00000-00&context=1516831)

Forbes.com

November 1, 2022 Tuesday

Copyright 2022 Forbes LLC All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1418 words

**Byline:** Alexandra S. Levine, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Influencers have the power to move the needle in elections. While they re keen to help get out the vote, many won t wade any deeper into ***politics*** to protect their brands.

**Body**

**Influencers have the power to move the needle in elections. While they re keen to help get out the vote, many won t wade any deeper into *politics* to protect their brands.**

Top voting organizations are leaning heavily on creators especially those from or with large followings in political battlegrounds to galvanize young voters in the November midterms.

Rock the Votehas teamed up with leading influencer marketing firmInfluentialafter their past collaboration helped drive hundreds of thousands of new voters in the 2020 election, they told**Forbes**. The 14 creators on board this cycle have more than a million followers across swing states alone. Prominent get-out-the-vote platformVote.orghas also enlisted micro-influencers, who have smaller but highly-engaged audiences, in tight, toss-up regions. AndGood To Vote(part ofHeadCount, another major driver of registrations) has brought on Gen Z internet stars likeZHC, who at age 23 has nearly 50 million followers.

The big question has been for so long: Does it make a difference? Vote.org CEO Andrea Hailey told**Forbes**. We can see on the back end of the technology right away the spike in participation and registrations. So we know that it does.

**CREATORS ROCK THE VOTE**

**Influencer and actor Greg Tarzan Davis, who has sizable followings in battleground states like Georgia and Florida, is helping the organization reach young voters through Instagram.**

The age makeup of the electorate is changing: Gen Z and millennials will account for nearly half of the U.S. voting population by the next presidential cycle, according toRock the Vote. (In 2020, they favored Biden over Trump by a margin of 20 percentage points,according to Pew.) Still, their turnout at the polls was lower than that of older Americans, an issue exacerbated by the pandemic, false claims of election fraud and other misinformation aimed at deterring voters. Get-out-the-vote groups are now trying hard to address that problem and de-politicize the process for this consequential bloc of voters, and many social media stars are happy to help.

But often, their foray into ***politics*** ends there.

As you get an audience, you learn things not to do, DeStorm Power, an online personality with 18 million followers across TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, told**Forbes**. It's very rare when creators are going to try to tell someone who to vote for because you'll get dragged you know not to say it.

DeStorm, who is participating in Rock the Vote s pro bono campaign, said he s been asked on many occasions to endorse a specific candidate but that he turns down those requests to avoid alienating the audience he s worked so hard to build. You didn't spend all these years building this trust in people to try to tell them to do what you want them to do, he added. You want them to do what they want to do, as long as they get out and do it.

Another creator supporting the Rock the Vote effort comedianSteven Riveraof battleground Florida, who has more than 6 million followers on TikTok offered to speak with**Forbes**so long as no political questions would be asked. (These influencers aren t the only ones choosing to shy away from ***politics***;2018 datafrom CIRCLE at Tufts, the university s research center focused on youth civic engagement in the U.S., found that less than a quarter of young people across nearly every state will share their views about ***politics*** on social media.)

Nonprofits like Rock the Vote and Vote.org, which bill themselves as nonpartisan, are also going to great lengths to keep their creators messaging from getting political. The organizations provide influencers with resources like state-level registration deadlines and voting options, and other authoritative information, to push to their followers. But Influential s Rock the Vote manual, for example, also tells creators: Don t mention specific candidates or Trump.

So much of our work is actually about educating voters; it's not telling them who to vote for, Rock the Vote president Carolyn DeWitt told**Forbes**.

Don t mention specific candidates or Trump. <footer>Get-out-the-vote guide for creators</footer>

Yet at a time when TikTok is becominga top destination for news, and creators can draw more eyeballs and engagement than news outlets, some argue that simply telling people to vote and stopping short of explaining certain politicians stances on specific issues is not going far enough.

Tanya Somanader, who served as director of digital rapid response in the Obama White House and is now advising Crooked Media sVote Save Americacampaign ahead of the midterms, said telling people to go vote has become a check-the-box thing for many creators. While she acknowledged the importance of urging people to register and cast their ballot, she believes dropping the mic there is a throwaway. Creators can be far more effective at galvanizing voters on either side of the aisle by talking pointedly about offices and issues, or what's on the ballot and what it actually means, she said telling you to vote for something or vote against something for a very specific reason.

If I were talking to a creator, and they're like, Yeah, well, I'm really nonpartisan, I'd be like, No, you're not. You're not! There's no such thing. You're not nonpartisan; you care about something! said Somanader. Do you care about the environment? Do you care about women's rights? Do you care about voting rights? Give me an issue you care about there's two positions on it. Which side is representative of the direction you want to go in? You might not sign up for a party, fine by me, but nobody's nonpartisan when it comes to their rights and the future of how the country is going to be run.

She added that it's only people who are very nervous about their brand or feel like their audience is not aligned with their political values that are going to keep that out of their voting altruism messaging.

It's only people who are very nervous about their brand... that are going to keep [***politics***] out of their voting altruism messaging. <footer>Tanya Somanader of Crooked s Vote Save America campaign</footer>

Some of the most powerful voices in youth ***politics*** subscribe to this school of thought. Gen Z for Change, for instance, is a case study in how civic organizations working with creators are being strategic in their positioning and blurring the lines between political and apolitical.

The coalition of hundreds of young social media creators boosting progressive causes has become a force in Democratic ***politics*** since starting out as the grassroots @TikTokforBiden during the 2020 presidential race. Yet director of ***politics***Olivia Julianna, herself a creator with nearly 1 million followers, said they keep about 60 percent of their work nonpartisan to maintain their 501(c)(4) tax status. TheIRS sayssuch nonprofits may engage in some political activities, so long as that is not its primary activity a rule that, as legal experts havepointed out, leaves the door wide open to interpretation. In the remaining 40 percent of Gen Z for Change s work, however that s defined, their goals are clear.

Julianna told**Forbes**that all of the group s campaigns have components that are political and politically neutral. Like with Rock the Vote and Vote.org, creators posting on behalf of Gen Z for Change are sharing nonpartisan get-out-the-vote content with educational and informational resources for young Americans. At the same time, individual members of the group s leadership team (all in their late teens and early 20s) have publicly thrown their weight behind specific candidates on the ballot. This week, Gen Z for Change is also launching a Battle for the Blue campaign on social media, focused on Florida and Texas.

It's very tricky to measure the lines of: what is partisan, what is nonpartisan? <footer>Olivia Julianna of Gen Z for Change</footer>

It's very tricky to measure the lines of: what is partisan, what is nonpartisan? Julianna said. (Case in point: While Influential s Rock the Vote manual tells creators don t mention a political party, it also says, we have the opportunity to elect officials who can protect access to abortion [and] tackle climate change. )

2016 to 2020, we saw an 11 point increase in young voters who went out and voted [using social media] undoubtedly had an effect on the election in 2020, Julianna added.

Our goal this time is to make a difference again in getting young people to the polls in a way that only social media can really do.

**MORE FROM FORBES**

**Load-Date:** November 2, 2022

**End of Document**