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Student Activism Involvement Increases as 2016 Election Moves Forward

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Despite the fact that the 2016 Election Day is still more than a year away, involvement and political activism among the student body has been strong. It's hard to walk across campus without being asked to sign a petition for an added proposition to the statewide ballot.

While neither of Maine's senators are up for reelection this cycle, Maine's Second Congressional District promises to be hotly contested after the district held for 20 years by Democrats was lost to Republican newcomer Rep. Bruce Poliquin in 2014. In addition to the statewide elections, 2016 is shaping up to be one of the most contentious presidential elections in decades.

The University of Maine College Democrats are committing to getting more students involved this year. The politically active club registers voters year-round and supports the addition of a minimum wage increase proposition to the statewide ballot in 2016.

They plan on handing out flyers with, what they call, objective information about the presidential candidate's positions on the issues and their plans for 2016. The club hopes disseminating the information and hosting watch parties for debates will help students make more informed decisions about their vote. First-year student Jacob Archer joined College Democrats this semester and is happy to be working towards increased student involvement

"The 18-to-34 demographic is the most underrepresented at the polls, and often times candidates are elected that don't have our age group's best interest in mind," Archer said. "If we get involved, we'll see changes that we want to see happen."

Archer is throwing his support behind Vermont senator and self-described socialist Bernie Sanders. Archer is not alone in his support of the charismatic senator, he's gaining a large following among younger voters, UMaine students included.

Student advocate Reuben Dendinger helped to organize an event on campus supporting Senator Sander's presidential campaign. Dendinger and other students gathered in Neville Hall to watch a livestream of a special town hall at George Mason University which was also streamed at other colleges and universities across the country.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the UMaine College Republicans are becoming active again after several years of reduced activity. College Republicans Vice Chair Andrew Brady emphasized that the club was looking forward and trying to grow involvement using the 2016 election as a starting point. Echoing the sentiments of Archer, Brady pointed out that young people were less likely to vote, and that College Republicans hoped to solve that problem through involvement.






"There's just a general lack of collegiates and young adults voting," Brady said. "To get them involved and excited about politics is the main goal of any collegiate political organization."

Furthermore, College Republicans is hoping to increase its membership over the course of the academic year with the hope that helping students become informed about candidates from both parties will help serve that goal.

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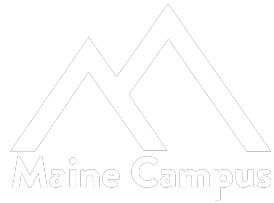


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