

Election



2020:



A Guide Made By Gen Zs, For Gen Zs

This isn't your ordinary election.

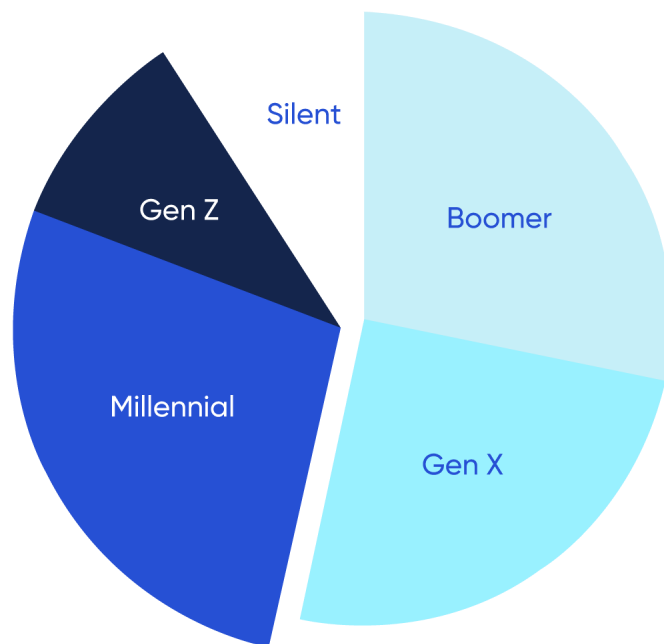
Donald Trump, a reality TV star/businessman-turned-President, has shaken up politics like no one before him. He's radically influenced America's culture, our sense of national pride, our relationships with other countries, and our political system. After years and years of politicians running politics, it's no surprise that the public got sick of the norm and elected someone as enigmatic and outside-the-box as Trump. Four years later, **you** get to decide: was the Trump administration a course-correction for America, or a grave mistake? Is Donald Trump a blip in the timeline, or the future of politics?

Founded a mere 244 years ago, America is an incredibly young country. We've made it past infancy and find ourselves experiencing growing pains. The winner of the 2020 election will decide, for better or for worse, what kind of country we are going to be moving forward. As a virus that's taken the lives of over 200,000 Americans continues to plague the

nation, the effects of climate change finally begin to take their toll on our environment (such as the wildfires blazing through California), and the public becomes increasingly “woke” and continues to question our justice and economic systems, only one thing is clear: the stakes haven’t been this high in a long time. The country gets more divided by the day, but through all the arguing and misinformation, the voice of one group of voters has managed to ring louder than the rest, and that’s the voice of Gen Zs.

Gen Zs (born 1996-2015) are the first generation to grow up with the world at their fingertips. Mobile technology, primarily the popularization of smartphones in the late 2000s, has given Gen Zs the ability to see a wide range of perspectives and has exposed corruption, inequalities, and hard truths that had been swapped under the rug and hidden from previous generations. This shocking amount of information, which has grown increasingly prone to manipulation as it grows more widespread, has fueled a fire in Gen Zs. Never has a generation so young been as informed, politically motivated, and *fed up* as Gen Zs. And that’s something to be excited about. Why? Because for the first time, a good chunk of us are old enough to vote in the 2020 General Election.

When polled, Gen Zs expressed a clear cynical skepticism about how much impact they could have in the 2020 election. Sure, our voices are some of the loudest on social media — but we’re the ones who helped build it. Can our generation *actually* shake up the election?



The answer is yes, we can. Paired with our sister generation, Millennials (whose political beliefs are [notably similar to ours](#), even though they aren't usually as in-your-face about it), we make up over a third of eligible voters. That's a big dent.

But to make that impact, we have to actually vote. In this election guide, you'll find an overview of candidates at the national and state level in Virginia to help you make an informed decision when you head to the polls by breaking down the issues **you** care about. Also included is a local election spotlight that demonstrates Gen Z's growing role in politics, *and* answers to all the burning questions you might have about voting. For many Gen Zs, it may be your first time voting. The process might seem a little confusing, but hopefully this guide makes it as simple as possible. So read on — and let's make history.

Presidential Election:

Meet the Candidates

Below is a brief overview of both major party candidates, Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden. Depending on your locality, a number of other candidates ([including rapper Kanye West](#) in 9 states!) may appear on your ballot. These third-party/independent candidates each bring a unique and important perspective to the presidential race, but they aren't mathematically projected to have a major impact in the election outside of the votes they'll take away from the major party candidates. For the sake of brevity, only the two major party candidates are included in our candidate biographies. To learn more about other candidates that may appear on your ballot, check out [KUTV's third-party candidate profile](#).



Republican Donald John Trump (born June 14, 1946 in Queens, NY) is currently serving as the 45th President of the United States of America. A businessman, author, and reality TV star, Trump “officially” began his career as a politician in 1999 when he filed to run for the Reform Party; he withdrew from the race in February 2000. He’s changed his party affiliation numerous times, most recently registering as a Republican in April of 2012.

His political career has been nothing short of eventful.

Trump is known for putting his personality on full display, making a point to challenge what is “politically correct” with his in-your-face Twitter page, tendency to name-call his opponents, and his offbeat comments. This has drawn a significant amount of criticism from his detractors, but his supporters appreciate Trump’s ability to challenge the norm and “tell it like it is.”

Trump’s presidency has been plagued by controversy. Most notably, he’s had numerous sexual assault accusations, was impeached on the grounds of abuse of power, recieved great criticism for his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has famously refused to

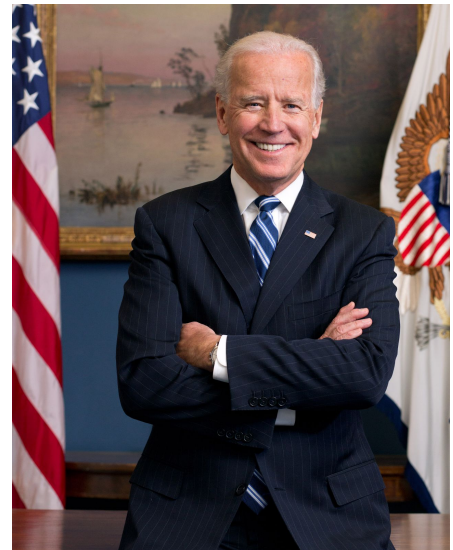
release his tax returns. The media's reporting of these events has led to Trump having a significantly sour relationship with the media, of which he has grown increasingly critical throughout his presidency. He's accused the media of bias when covering his presidency and is credited with popularizing the term "fake news" ([ballotpedia](#)).

Despite this, Trump is inarguably charismatic. Donald Trump's fascinating public persona and his courage to challenge political norms have helped him develop a fiercely loyal group of supporters like few politicians before him. Trump promises to lift up working America and return it to a former glory that many of his supporters feel has been lost.

Donald Trump runs with Vice President Mike Pence, a former Indiana Governor who has received criticism for his opinions on the LGBTQ+ community and his tendency to let religion influence his politics, but who is praised for complimenting Trump's bombastic personality with a more traditional, safer public image.

Democrat Joseph Robinette "Joe" Biden (born November 20, 1942 in Scranton, PA) is the former Vice President of the United States, serving under President Barack Obama. Before serving as Vice President, he was a Senator for Delaware ([ballotpedia](#)).

Biden's political career has been notably less controversial than the average politician; he's been less criticized for his actions, but more so for his stances and his capacity to perform well. If elected, Joe Biden would be the oldest person to assume the presidency at 77 (a record currently held by his opponent Trump, who assumed the presidency at age 70). During public appearances, Biden has made numerous slip-ups and has demonstrated slight memory issues. Coupled with his age, questions have been raised about his mental capacity to handle a position as important as President.



Biden's political stances have also drawn controversy from Democrats, many of whom would prefer a candidate that leans more left. He has famously refused to change his position on many policies on which a large portion of Democrats disagree with him. He's been slow to embrace federal marijuana legalization, won't commit to defunding the police in response to the 2020 re-ignition of the Black Lives Matter movement, and his economic

plans are far from progressive in comparison to other leading Democrats such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. However, he's made an attempt to unify the Democratic party by working with far-left Democrats.

Despite these criticisms, Joe Biden has the public persona of your typical "nice guy." Compared to Donald Trump, Joe is perceived as nicer, more level-headed, and has far more political experience. Joe Biden may not be the progressive voice that many young Democrats want, but if elected, many believe he'd be a restorative president that could get things "back on track" to where we were in the Obama Era.

Joe Biden is running with Kamala Harris as his Vice President pick. Harris is a member of the U.S. Senate from California. She ran for president before dropping out and becoming Biden's VP choice. She's frequently praised for her personable public image and eloquence as well as balancing out Joe Biden's more center-leaning policies with a further-left viewpoint. However, she's drawn criticism for hypocrisy in her criminal justice record (most notably [overseeing a shocking amount of marijuana convictions](#) despite admitting to using it herself).

On The Key Issues

We asked you, Gen Zs, what issues were most important to you. Below, we highlight the candidates' platforms on the top 5 issues that *you* chose, so you can make the most informed decision when you're ready to mark your ballot!

Climate Change

Donald Trump: Trump has questioned the validity of climate change and the agenda of scientists who claim it's an issue. Trump has claimed to be both a believer and a skeptic of climate change at different times, but he's made it clear that it is not a priority of his administration. He withdrew the US from the Paris Climate Accord, sending a message to the world that the United States was not to be a key player in the fight against climate change.

Joe Biden: Biden has become increasingly progressive on the issue of climate change. In July 2020, he proposed spending \$2 trillion over four years on clean energy projects and ending carbon emission due to power plants by the year 2035. The latter has even been embraced by further-left candidates who tend to have more extreme ideas on how to combat climate change. Biden has made an effort to seek ideas from politicians such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the latter being a chief proponent of the Green New Deal.

Source: [CNN](#)

Racial Justice/The Black Lives Matter Movement

Donald Trump: Trump has claimed that he's been the best President of all time for African Americans. His attitude towards the Black Lives Matter movement has been critical, calling the slogan a "symbol of hate" and questioning the motives behind its supporters. Some of the comments he's made throughout his career and presidency have also been deemed racist by many; he's also questioned whether or not white privilege and systemic racism are real. During the first 2020 presidential debate, he refused to condemn white supremacy, though he later condemned all white supremacists in an interview. However, he has signed the First Step Act, which benefited many prisoners of color; he signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act into law to benefit neighborhoods with high populations of people of color; and he's signed a bipartisan bill to renew \$255 million in funding for HBCUs and other institutions serving people of color.

Joe Biden: Biden has been more of a vocal supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement than Trump, but has been hesitant to support some of the movement's most ambitious proposals. For

example, rather than defunding the police, Biden supports putting more funding into the police so they can do their jobs more appropriately and humanely. However, he still has plans to support people of color. While he hasn't been a champion supporter of reparations for descendants of enslaved Africans, he has outlined proposals to help close the wealth gap between black and white Americans. He also supports reforming education, housing, and the justice system to create a fairer America for people of color.

Source: [LA Times](#)

Gun Violence

Donald Trump: Trump has acknowledged a major issue in the United States with gun violence and has expressed support for universal background checks. He banned bump stocks (attachments that make semi-automatic rifles fire continuously) in the wake of the 2017 Las Vegas shooting and has backed red flag gun laws at state levels, which allow for more intervention to restrict someone in crisis from having access to firearms. However, Trump has expressed skepticism that guns are the primary cause of gun violence and is lighter on gun control

than his opponent. He points to mental health as playing a bigger part in gun violence than guns.

Joe Biden: Biden believes that the United States has "a huge problem with guns." To combat gun violence, Biden says he will push to ban assault weapons and create a federal gun-buyback program to get more weapons off the street. Additionally, he supports universal background checks and stricter policies on gun manufacturers.

Source: [CNN](#)

Immigration/Abolishing ICE

Donald Trump: President Trump does not support abolishing ICE but instead supports stricter controls on immigration. He proposed the construction of a wall on the US-Mexico border and his administration's 2018 "zero tolerance" policy has led to thousands of family separations at the border due to parents being detained for crossing the border illegally. Children have been left in cages, drawing comparisons to concentration camps, as reports of unsafe conditions at these sites raise ethical concerns. Trump proposed a merit-based immigration system that, according to CNN, "[establishes] a points-based system for green card holders and [restricts] sponsorship to spouses and minor children." He has also ended Obama-era protections for undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children.

Joe Biden: Joe Biden supports immigration reform, but has spoken out against abolishing ICE, stating they aren't the main problem. He supports a pathway for citizenship for undocumented

immigrants and says that those with no criminal records should be “the focus” of deportation. He also believes those seeking asylum should have a chance to make their case, although he does not support decriminalization of crossing the border illegally.

Sources: [Washington Examiner](#), [CNN](#)

LGBTQ+ Rights

Donald Trump: Trump has claimed to be the best president for LGBTQ+ citizens. However, he has repeatedly done things throughout his presidency that have harmed the LGBTQ+ community. GLAAD has documented 175 “attacks” on the community by Trump in policy and rhetoric. The most notable among these included banning transgender people from serving in the military and pushing for exemptions allowing healthcare workers to refuse caring for transgender people and those positive for HIV/AIDS.

Joe Biden: Biden has been a vocal supporter of same sex marriage since 2012 and has consistently criticized Trump’s handling of LGBTQ+ issues. He released a plan in March to combat Trump’s anti-LGBTQ policies, which includes passing the Equality Act. He’s also promised to commit to fighting against violence that is disproportionately targeted against black transgender women.

Source: [USA Today](#)

Virginia Senate Election: Meet the Candidates



Democrat Mark Warner is a current member of the Senate from Virginia who is running for re-election. He currently serves on several Senate Committees including Intelligence, Budget, Finances, Banking Housing and Urban Affairs, and Rules and Administration. Since 2008, has served as a U.S. Senator. He previously served as the Governor of Virginia from 2002 to 2006. Notably, he delivered the keynote address at the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

Before entering politics, Warner worked in telecommunications and co-founded NexTel Communications. He received his bachelor's degree from George Washington University and his law degree from Harvard Law School ([Ballotpedia](#)).

Republican Daniel Gade is running to represent Virginia in the Senate in 2020. From 1992 to 2017, he served in the United States Army. He states that his political philosophy is to serve the Constitution, going on to say that he “[believes] in economic growth powered by individual liberty and Constitutional fidelity.”

In 1997, Gade earned a bachelor's degree in environmental science from the United States Military Academy at West Point. He went on to earn a Master's Degree and a PhD in public administration and policy from the University of Georgia in 2007 and 2011 respectively. Gade's further experience includes working with the US Department of Labor and American University's School of Public Affairs ([Ballotpedia](#)).



On The Key Issues

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Climate Change

Mark Warner: Warner considers climate change to be a major threat and a priority to address. He believes that climate change is “one of the largest threats to our health, economy, and national security.” He supports investing in new technologies to reduce harmful emissions, wants to find ways to use coal more “responsibly,” and co-sponsored a bill for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Daniel Gade: Gade does not consider climate change to be a major threat or a top priority. He questions how much of climate change is actually caused by human behavior and fears that policies to fight climate change could cripple our economy. He wants the “best energy production mix,” which includes natural gas, oil, and coal.

Source: [Campus Election Engagement Project](#)

Racial Justice/The Black Lives Matter Movement

Mark Warner: Warner is a strong believer of the Black Lives Matter movement. He has promised to be committed to fighting for racial equality and battling systemic racism and believes that his white privilege has helped him succeed in business and in politics.

Daniel Gade: Gade largely agrees with Warner on the issue of racial justice. Unlike many Republicans, Gade believes that Black Lives Matter is a necessary movement fighting for social equality. He's expressed concerns about the rate of black male incarceration in the United States and how they disproportionately get the death penalty in comparison to white men for the same crimes, even going as far to compare the number of black men in prison to the number of slaves in 1864.

Source: [WRIC](#)

Gun Violence

Mark Warner: Mark Warner is a vocal supporter of gun control. He calls most gun control measures proposed by Democrats as “common sense.” He has co-sponsored an assault weapons ban and introduced a bill to enact gun violence protection measures, which include red flag laws.

Daniel Gade: Daniel Gade is not in favor of gun control. He believes owning guns is a “God-given right to protect ourselves.” He’s expressed concerns about gun confiscation and has deemed red flag laws unconstitutional.

Source: [Campus Election Engagement Project](#)

Immigration

Mark Warner: Warner co-sponsored a bipartisan bill that allowed a path to citizenship for DREAMers, but that also allowed \$25 billion for border wall funding.

Daniel Gade: A public position for Gade on DACA/DREAMers cannot be found, however Gade supports limited humanitarian asylum. He also supports a guest worker program in which “highly skilled workers” would be recruited from other countries.

Source: [Campus Election Engagement Project](#)

LGBTQ+ Rights

Mark Warner: Warner is a strong supporter of LGBTQ+ rights. He co-sponsored the Equality Act and has stated it is “always wrong” to fire someone just for being LGBTQ+.

Daniel Gade: Gade has spoken out against the Equality Act. He believes that the government should not make churches accommodate LGBTQ+ citizens and has said that granting rights to LGBTQ+ citizens is a sign that religious freedom is “under attack.”

Source: [Campus Election Engagement Project](#)

Local Election Spotlight:



Colonial Heights School Board

Look, Gen Zs are busy. A lot of us are in school, working, trying to keep active social lives, and of course, fighting for justice every day. With news of the 2020 Presidential Election being shoved down our throats all the time, it's easy for us to feel politically fatigued, too. But we have to find the time to pay attention to local politics.

A focus group conducted for this election guide found that Gen Zs tend to not pay attention to local politics for various reasons, including not having the time, feeling political-fatigue from other elections, or just not ever hearing anyone talk about it. So let's talk about it.

To make a big change, we have to start small. Let's take a look at a local election where a Gen Z decided to throw his name in the hat and make his voice heard.

Candidate Analysis: Alfred G. Collins, IV

This May, Alfred G. Collins, IV graduated from Colonial Heights High School. The first thing he did post-graduation? Launch a campaign to run for the Colonial Heights School Board. Collins has been critical of the Colonial Heights school system, but of course, what high schooler doesn't have a long list of complaints about their school? Collins is well aware of

this, but instead of being just another person complaining about the problems, he wants to be part of the solution. And who better, he believes, to address the issues in a school system than someone who just received his diploma from it?

The addition of Collins on the ballot for School Board certainly shook things up. 3 seats are up for grabs on the Board - and before Collins, there were 3 candidates on the ballot. These candidates include Lia Tremblay, mother to a son with cognitive disabilities and an advocate for families with children with disabilities; Angie Woody, a longtime member of the Board running for re-election who is determined to see the school through these “unprecedented times;” and Keith Kapinskis, a small business owner and father of four. All 3 have some sort of experience and qualification to secure a seat on the board. Collins, on the other hand, doesn’t have much on his resume other than his freshly-obtained diploma, but he’s been “in the trenches” so to speak in a way the other candidates have not. Now that he, too, has gotten himself on the ballot, it’s become a real race - there will now be three winners, and one loser.

Collins’ campaign has gone about as one would expect from someone who has no experience in politics or education, letting his nerves get to him at a town hall and flubbing responses to objectively easy questions; he’s also the only candidate on Colonial Heights’ [“Meet the Candidates”](#) page who has failed to submit a bio or even a photo. But let’s give credit where credit is due - his name is still on that page, and he showed up to that Town Hall and answered those questions regardless.

Alfred Collins may not fill a seat on the School Board this year, but the odds were stacked against him from the beginning, and we can’t count him out just yet. His inclusion on the ballot and participation in the election cycle are notable and commendable. At the young age of 18, fresh out of high school, Collins is daring to try and make a difference. Gen Zs all around the country are moving to get more involved in politics, and Alfred’s name appearing on the ballot is a small part of a greater movement for the youth to finally be included in the political narrative and taken seriously.

Of course, you don’t have to run for office to make your voice heard (although it certainly helps). The easiest thing you can do is go out and vote. If it’s your first time voting - or even if it’s not - voting can be an intimidating and confusing process. But it doesn’t have to be. Read on to get the answers to all your burning questions about voting in the upcoming election!

Voting FAQs

You've got questions? We've got answers. Read below for some great resources to use as you get ready to vote!

Is it too late to register to vote?

Voter registration deadlines vary state-to-state. For a complete list of registration deadlines, check out [vote.org's list](#).

Am I eligible to vote? How do I check to see if I'm already registered?

There are tons of great tools to find out your voter eligibility and registration status! Check out [Can I Vote's home page](#) for guidance with these questions. You can find your polling place there, too!

How do I request an absentee/mail-in ballot?

There are many ways to request an absentee ballot. Try using the [U.S. Vote Foundation's service](#) to request yours!

Is mail-in voting secure?

After President Trump has raised concerns numerous times over voter fraud due to mail-in voting, many people are wondering how secure mail-in voting is. Fact checkers have discredited most of the claims, but it is true that fraud is slightly more common with mail-in voting than in-person voting. However, the difference is so miniscule that, statistically speaking, it's not a relevant difference. The [fraud rate of mail-in voting](#) is just 0.000006%. Currently, no evidence suggests that mail-in voting will result in rampant voter fraud.

Other than the candidates running for office, what other issues may appear on my ballot?

Different candidates/issues will appear on your ballot depending on your state and locality. To prepare for exactly what will be on yours, you can use [Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup Tool](#).

What can I expect when I vote in-person?

[Accredited Online Schools](#) has a wonderful page dedicated to describing the voting process in-depth for first time voters and student voters.

How else can I get involved in politics and make my voice heard?

Great question! There are so many ways to play an active role in politics, and a lot of them are super easy! You can contact your local officials about concerns you have/issues you care about, you can donate to political organizations that you support, you can share information about candidates or petitions that are important to you with those you know either in-person or on social media, you can volunteer on election day and become a poll worker, and if you're really feeling inspired, you can even run for local office! The world is at your fingertips - and it's waiting on you to make a change.

IN CLOSING.....

Gen Zs are arguably the most politically-motivated and inspired generation in a long time. We are so passionate about our beliefs, in fact, that many of us refuse to compromise them. This serves us well in our fight for a Better America, but if we aren't careful, it can hold us back too. A focus group conducted for this election guide reveals that Gen Zs are generally apathetic to both major party candidates, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, and that we felt more represented by candidates that didn't make it past the primaries. Despite this, we absolutely must recognize how important it is to vote for the candidate that **most** represents what we believe in and for what we are fighting. This could very well be the most important election of our entire lives, and every single one of us who can participate should do so. There's a lot at stake, and we have our whole lives ahead of us. We need to do everything we can to secure the future that we want — for our generation, and all the ones after us. Let's make it happen. **See you at the polls!**

Created by Ben Lewis.

Image sources (in order of appearance)

britannica.com (both American flags on first page)

nextgenamerica.org

whitehouse.gov

wikipedia.org

britannica.com

ballotpedia.org

thefire.org