Speaker 1 (00:00):
I, um, I did introduce myself to her because no, I don't literally, like nothing she says I agree about, but, but I do also feel like every single time I've watched anything with the board, it's fun. The exact same opinion.

Speaker 2 (00:14):
Get us started here, now lined up for you. Welcome to Paus 2022, your ballot Houston Shot. I'm Andrea Lopez via Fanya, and I'm the managing editor at host of San Diego. And I am so, so honored to be hosting this panel. You are all very accomplished and I can't wait to see you. Um, you know, take on your, your next roles as you continue through your paths. Maybe one day one of you guys will be reading this city for, uh, this country, and I'll get to ask you all kinds of questions. Um, first, uh, if you're not familiar with us voices, we're a nonprofit. Here's organization that focuses on investigative journalism. So we like to say, um, that we find things that people don't want us to find and we help people understand and educate our readers. Uh, first I'd like to give a second to recognize our sponsors who may politic as possible.

Speaker 2 (01:12):
Bear with me, this is a long list. Thank you. This year, uh, we'd like to give a special thanks to a for support as a lead sponsor and to the College of Arts and Sciences at University of San Diego for being our partner for the fifth year. So thanks to them, we're in this lovely location. And of course, to USD's, Department of Political Science and International Relations, the Sequan Band of the KU Young Nation, Cox Communications, Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest Kiski Development Tor us and the Burning Center. Woo. Okay. Um, and a special thanks. Another shout out to Cox for underwriting This panel, Cox Communication has always focused on youth and education and bringing the digital divide, bridging, sorry, bridging the digital divide so that all students are connected and have the digital tools they need to succeed. Now I'll introduce our fantastic campus. Ariana Alvarado will be moderating today. She's a 10th grade student at Lincoln High School. She's very, very active and she dreams of studying business and law at nyu.

Speaker 3 (02:24):
Okay, so I'm gonna take the time to introduce my other fellow panelists. First I'm gonna ask Diana to introduce herself.

Speaker 4 (02:31):
Uh, hi everyone. My name is Diana Pronoun SheHer. I'm the second year at U C S D, majoring in political Science and ethnic studies. Um, in the past I did advocacy for the Youth Opportunity passes and transportation equity. And currently I'm a Grants fellow with the district for office for the county.

Speaker 5 (02:50):
Hi, my name is Abraham Jarvis. Uh, I am now finishing up my senior year at Lincoln High School. And, uh, I'm gonna keep it short, simple. That's just my life. And thank

Speaker 6 (02:59):
You. Uh, hello. My name is Dam Danon. I am a, uh, Junior University City High School. I'm currently the editor in chief of the School Paper, and I moved here about two years ago, uh, from En California.
Speaker 7 (03:12):
Hi there. I'm Matthew Turano. Uh, I'm a current student at San Diego High School. I currently sit on the Student Advisory Board throughout the San Diego Unified School District. As it's president, I really like to foster student voices. A lot of my work has been done with STEAM programs with, uh, with, um, K 12 inclusive excellence, um, to really bring student voice to the table.

Speaker 1 (03:34):
Uh, hello, my name is Michael Cosma. I am a junior at University City High School. I got involved with political engagement after taking an ethnic studies course in my freshman year. And our final was to go to an organization and advocate for something. Uh, and so I got really interested in Henrietta Lacks, who was a black woman mistreated in the medical system, and to advocate for curriculum about her and our biomedical programs at San Unified. Uh, and from there I got involved in some other committees such as my school's, School site council, which manages Title I funding, and then sort of the parent organization for that, the District Advisory Council.

Speaker 8 (04:12):
Um, hi everyone. My name is Donoli Fitzgerald. I'm a 10th grade student at San Diego High School. Um, and I'm really excited to be here. I became a founding member of the Java Service Club, Chubby the Congress in seventh grade. And that kind of started my journey as like a community organizer and an activist. Um, I currently serve as the chubby, the Congress's, uh, vice President and the Chair of the Community Organizing Committee. Um, and I'm also this year's director of equity and inclusion of the SD s d uh, Student Advisory Board.

Speaker 3 (04:46):
Thank you so much to our wonderful panelists for those introductions. I'm gonna start off this conversation with the first question. What's a favorite moment you've experienced while being engaged politically? I'm gonna ask Matthew to answer this question first.

Speaker 7 (05:00):
Thank you. I'm really happy to answer this question. I think one of the best things that comes through political activism and engagement is that feeling of the aha moment. Um, and it's a little hard to describe, but especially in today's political climate, there's a lot we see a lot of divides, um, which is just an unhappy truth. And when you make that connection with somebody and you find that common understanding with somebody that you and I, we can see on the same page, we can approach these issues not as enemies, but as partners. That moment when we can all realize that really sparks interest in me and it's a beautiful thing to see. Thank you.

Speaker 3 (05:39):
Thank you so much, Matthew. I feel like it is really important that we all work together because that's the only way that we're going to truly grow as a society. Dana, would you like to add on? Oh,

Speaker 4 (05:49):
Sure. Um, I think that my favorite part about being engaged politically was winning. And I think that's something that we don't talk about often because when you're involved politically, you know that campaigns take a lot of years, decades sometimes, but I got to experience a small win in my, um,
advocacy. So I, like I mentioned before, I advocated for free transportation bus passes for youth 18 and under. And if you don’t know, we actually got the pilot program. Thank you. We got the pilot program passed this past May, and it extends all the way to June of next year. So I think just knowing that I worked on that campaign since my freshman year of high school and still continuing now as like a sophomore in college, um, seeing the work that the people that came before me that worked on this campaign got that small win. So I think, you know, as much as I wanna focus on the moments that it, the beginnings like Matthew said, or like the contribution that everyone plays into it, I think winning is such a great thing to have. <laugh>.

Speaker 3 (06:55):
Thank you so much Diana. And I just also want to thank you for working on the bus passes because I really use those free bus passes to my, um, I’m gonna move on to the next question and the next question is, what moments from the past inspire you or motivate you to be involved politically? What should other youth know about these moments? Michael, would you like to answer this question first?

Speaker 1 (07:17):
Yes, thank you. Um, I definitely owe a lot of credit to my success in political engagement to Zachary Patterson. Uh, Zachary Patterson was the former student board member, um, and he was such an inspiring person. He was really dedicated to helping other students get involved. And when I was getting involved with my work with Henrietta Lax, he was there to support me with that. He encouraged me to get involved in other committees and whenever I had questions, he was the first person I’d reached out to cuz he always was willing to respond and responded with wonderful information. I really think that what everyone can learn from him is that a dedicated individual can make a lot of change. Uh, despite graduating from San Diego, um, or from University City High School, he has still had a lasting effect on the San Diego Unified. So there’s still student board members because of him. There’s still people that are engaged because of him and he’s really opened the door to a lot of us to be able to help other students get involved politically.

Speaker 3 (08:20):
Thank you so much, Michael. I’m gonna ask Sanjana, would you like to add on?

Speaker 8 (08:26):
Um, sure. Thank you. Um, so for me, my journey as like a community activist and organizer started when I was in seventh grade. Um, as I mentioned, um, when I first joined the, or became a founding member of the Esso Child Service Club studies, the Congress. Um, and that was where I was first exposed to all the possibilities, um, of advocacy and activism. And I learned to like build influence, um, and power into my own voice even as a kid. Um, and that is where I also first learned about grassroots organizing. I had never, um, heard of that before. Um, and I became an organizer that year when I started my campaign, um, to support a ballot measure of for that year. Um, that was a proposition that was working to, um, reclaim mass funding for our schools and communities. And I worked really hard on that.

Speaker 8 (09:17):
Um, and I was in seventh grade and this was during quarantine. And so I think that although I could talk a lot, a lot about many different, um, moments during my years and being, um, politically active and involved, I think that this was especially unique because I, it was my first experience and the things that I was doing were really new to me. So I was leading and failing and succeeding and growing, um, and
learning all at the same time. So there were a lot of different things that were mixed into each moment, um, but eventually was that campaign. Um, I did end up not getting it to pass because there were a lot of forces that I was working against and I was only in seventh grade, but I learned a lot <laugh>, I learned a lot from that experience. Um, and I was actually able to, um, bring the kinds of le lessons that I learned into the next year where I started a campaign to get me a better mental health support in our school district.

Speaker 8 (10:11):
And we actually did succeed in getting that. Um, and I just wanted to say like, as far as what youth should know about some of the, um, moments that like inspire me the most is that even though a lot of the work that I do has to do with public speaking and, um, addressing people outreach, um, a lot of like conversing and discussing, I feel that it's really important to remember that you don't need to be anything to be in that position. I like, um, led a protest a couple weeks back, um, for a climate strike at my school, and I made a speech in front of City Hall, um, and I was calling out all of these problems. I was, it was really strong, but I was shaking so much during that speech and like you would think that after three years of being involved in like making, doing public speaking and like, um, knowing how to word, um, my arguments, I wouldn't have that problem. But I definitely do. So I think it's important that, um, you know, that you can, you can be anywhere. I mean, I'm not, my skills at public speaking are not any more than any other person. And even though it's intimidating, those moments of failure and success are what motivate me the most. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Speaker 3 (11:21):
Thank you so much, Sanjana. And I just wanna ask you an additional question about your protest and your buck protest, because I did see that and the outcome was really, really great. And I just wanna ask about your experience and how did it feel leading something so powerful?

Speaker 8 (11:35):
Thank you so much. Um, yeah, it was a really, really great, um, like impactful experience. It was the second climate strike that I have led, um, with my climate action civic leadership club at my school. Um, but we were able to mobilize, I think almost a thousand students. So we had a really, really good turnout. Um, and the protest was for, um, asking that President Biden declare a national emergency for the climate, um, emergency. And so I think that it really was impactful just in like, growing together as a movement. Um, like we circulated a petition, um, and we made speeches and there was an oil spill demonstration. Um, and we got covered by news articles and it was really, really great. So, um, thank you so much. I'm really proud of like, the amount of like work and mobilizing that we were able to do.

Speaker 3 (12:27):
Thank you so much, son, Jen. That's really great. I'm gonna ask Abraham to add on,

Speaker 5 (12:34):
Uh, me personally, when it comes to what inspired me coming from the southeast of San Diego, uh, as me being a young driver, I was often harassed by the police, uh, the police department. And that was because of just the way I looked. And I, and I learned that on early because it was multiple times I was getting pulled over for things such as my light, my light seen on not turning on, and then me resulting in being the back of a, a police car. And I learned young that, uh, I want to change because this is our community at the end of the day. And I wanted to, uh, I don't, I don't like seeing that because I learned
how often it is not just to me, but to those around me coming from the same area. So that motivated me to realizing that this has to come to a different, uh, different approach. You get what I’m saying? So I understand now that, uh, it's rolled on to me, but like looking into social justice and seeing the, uh, the difference in the justice system and just realizing that, uh, there's many, there's many problems that we have in it, and I want to be the one that, that helps bring out these problems to light and coming with a solution as a whole. So that's what motivated me. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 3 (13:41):
And I would also like to ask, uh, during advocating for change, was there any like chance, like parts of difficulty that you experienced?

Speaker 5 (13:51):
I say, I say most definitely because of, uh, the, there's not many resources when it comes to that topic. You, you get what I'm saying? So it's, it's me going out trying to look, there's, there's only such things you can do because yes, you can, you can write a report in a, uh, in saying this happened, but what comes after that? Because I, because then there was the same police officer that pulled me over and did the same thing, so obviously that warning wasn't enough. So yeah, I feel there's, there's more of restraint going on when it comes to things like that, but it's, it is our job to just keep pushing forward and trying to, uh, trying to break down that door.

Speaker 3 (14:24):
Thank you so much Abraham. Damien, I'm gonna ask you to finish off this question.

Speaker 6 (14:30):
Sure. So for me, um, it wasn't really like a specific moment that kind of told me, you know, Oh, you know, I'm inspired by this. To me it was more of a constant thing growing up. Um, I grew up in, in Santa California about two hours from the border. Um, and just constantly hearing the news, things like, you know, 30 women die in just a stay out of femicides every single month. So it's basically one a day. Um, you know, having a twin sister and hearing those kinds of things, always making sure she walks in front of me. Um, hearing that journalist politicians who speak their mind are constantly killed. Um, just having this constant awareness in the back of my head kind of always kept me, you know, thinking about what could be done about it.

Um, so when I moved here two years ago, I kind of just started taking every single chance I could to really, um, do something about things that matter to me. Um, in terms of a specific person I may look up to. Um, it may be a bit of an obvious choice, but, you know, I'm currently the age that Greta Thunberg was when she did her famous speech. So it just always a reminder of me that there's really no excuse for not doing anything. You know, she's 16 and she's done, you know, she was 16 when she did that and she, you know, in these couple of years she's done so, so much. Um, I consider myself a very lucky person, you know, um, and I just constantly try to remind myself that, you know, for this shirt that I'm wearing to be made, um, for this chair that I'm sitting in to be made, you know, there was a lot of, you know, people and suffering that that went through. And so to just constantly remember that it's not just that I feel the need to do it, it's the fact that it's my responsibility to something about the, the issues that I see every single day.
Speaker 3 (16:03):
Awesome. Thank you so much. Day in. Moving on to the next question. What advice do you have for youth who wanna be more politically engaged? Uh, I'm gonna give this question. Oh, I'm sorry. And what advice would you give to your younger self? I'm gonna give this question to Matthew.

Speaker 7 (16:21):
Yeah, I, I'd love to answer this question. Um, I think my journey started, it's really hard to pinpoint the start of a journey because so much of today's politics and engagement is not based on what you know, it's based on who you know. And it's hard if you are a youth that's just starting out to make that first step of finding that one person that'll start you on the path of getting the people that you know, I think to any youth that's listening to this, I would recommend that just make your first steps. I would never have been able to become president of the student advisory board if I never learned the skills or had the experience that I got from the 50 other things that came before it. So make your first steps. Make your first step. Maybe join a club, send an email to a teacher, tell somebody about something that you don't like about our school system. Make that first step, gain that first step of experience, make cuz once you are part of the system and once you have that first point of contact, it is really, really, it's so much easier and it opens up so many doors beyond that. Thank you.

Speaker 3 (17:33):
Thank you Matthew. And I just wanna ask an additional question was, uh, you said that there was like, usually you need one person to take you onto the pathway. Uh, did you have that one person and what type of experiences did they bring for you?

Speaker 7 (17:47):
For me, it wasn't really, really one person. I would say that my first person, um, the first person that got me started my journey was, uh, my middle school teacher, middle school history teacher named Ms. Anthony, who, uh, invited me to a club called Model United Nations, which met in this very same building in six, four years ago. Um, and that's, that's probably where I would pinpoint my journey of political activism. I, um, I found my passion for, you know, pretty small issues that I think we could solve locally, like, um, world hunger and world peace, stuff like that. Um, but that really called to me that I idea of actually getting stuff done, getting a bunch of people thinking together about something that they care about really spoke to me and that really opened up all so many doors for me. Thank you.

Speaker 3 (18:37):
Thank you so much for that wonderful answer. Matthew, Diana, would you like to add

Speaker 4 (18:41):
On? Yeah, I love your response to think, you know, that is, especially what you said about that one person, I think, you know, out in the crowd, I have my teacher here, Ms. Tyler, she's, she's that one person for me along with other people. You know, it's not just one takes a village, a village, a community, um, but the advice that I would give my younger self, um, don't be afraid to take that first step. Just, um, get outta your comfort zone a little bit if you're always in your comfort zone, how you're gonna grow. So I think just taking that first step out of that little box that you put yourself in is gonna make a great change. And I think something else that I definitely needed to hear was, um, to not underestimate your knowledge and your input in what you're saying. I think Sanjana brought it up earlier.
Speaker 4 (19:25):
Um, people are gonna underestimate you already because you're a youth. And I think when you're in a room, those adults are gonna look at you and they're gonna be like, Why, why are you here? Why do you think you know so much? And I think that, um, coming from our communities, we're living the issues that are going on. We know that they're there and we know that there's solutions that need to come and they need to come soon. And I think that youth are very powerful in the way that they are very creative. And, um, we have a lot of ideas just here in this panel. I've hearing a lot of great things. Um, so I think that just speak, speak from the heart and speak what you know, because even though you don't know these theories or you don't know what these adults are saying, or maybe they're vocabulary a little bit, um, higher than yours, but you're still saying the same thing. And if you're speaking from the heart and you're speaking from experience, then there's no reason why you should be underestimating yourself.

Speaker 3 (20:22):
Thank you so much, Diana. And I do think it's really important that we break that barrier of youth and labeling youth as just youth and pushing their opinions aside simply just because of that. Because instead of labeling them as youth and just seeing them as little, we need to start working with them and collaborating with them and seeing them as creative minds that we could work with instead of just pushing their opinions aside. Like, this world isn't gonna be theirs in the future. San would you like to add on? Sure.

Speaker 8 (20:48):
Thank you so much. Um, I think my strongest advice that I can give to you wanting to get more engaged, um, in political scenes is kind of similar to what Diana said, um, that you should not hold yourself back. You, um, you should claim your space and you should make sure that you assert your opinions and what you’re passionate about. Um, don't censor yourself. And no matter what anybody tells you, you are just as qualified as any other adult that dominates that space. And so you have a duty, you have a right, um, as a community member to, um, advocate for what you’re passionate about, advocate for your rights, for your needs. Um, and I think that there's a process to getting to that point. Um, for me personally, I have been in situations where I am presenting to people about my own struggles, my own, uh, personal experiences.

Speaker 8 (21:38):
And my first couple times doing this, I was really uncomfortable. I really held myself back because I felt that because I was so much younger and I was presenting to people that had so many more years of experience and knowledge, my experiences were inconsequential to them and wouldn't mean enough. Um, how would my experiences as a 13 or 14 year old, um, in seventh and eighth grade, like mean anything to a school board member? But I, once I got to the point where I realized that I'm never gonna be successful in being an activist or an advocate, if I don't fully commit to what I’m saying and express myself the way I want to, um, and fully follow through in what I'm passionate about and not hold myself back, um, l, if I, if I can get to that point, that's when I can really, um, connect with people and allow them to relate to me and build a movement because that's the kind of work that I want to do. Um, and so I think that it's just really, really important that, um, you should always remember that as a member of the society and as a member of your community, you need to put your voice out there, um, and just don't hold your back. You don't hold yourself back. Um, you deserve to be there just as much as any other person.
Thank you so much. So Jonna, that was really beautifully said. Uh, I'm gonna ask mi Damien to add on. No, Michael, I'm so sorry.

Um, yeah, I'd say my biggest advice for anyone looking to get politically engaged, and this isn't just for youth, but uh, specifically for youth that are busy with school, it can be a really big commitment. I, I would estimate I spend about 15 to 20 hours a week working towards political engagement. So I mean, that means on Monday I had a meeting with a superintendent and then I had an SSC meeting. And then on Tuesday I met with teachers, union representatives, and then I, um, chaired an, uh, committee to look at some documents related to the board of education. So when you are engaged in all this, it can be a lot of work. And if it's not something that you're interested in, it becomes a chore very quickly. You become unengaged very quickly and you don't accomplish the goals that you set out to accomplish.

So I really think finding that area within politics that's applicable to you that you are interested in is very important to actually see results. Uh, and then my second piece of advice is that in those 15 to 20 hours a week, and not everyone does that, but no matter how engaged you are, a lot of the work is going to be preparing slideshow, it's gonna be emailing people, it's gonna be learning how to communicate with the people that you're working with. Yes. And that's just as much as the actual meetings themselves and the the actions that you gotta make. So any chance you get to improve your email skills to make that presentation, to practice speaking in front of people you're not comfortable with that is just as important as having the dedication to go to these meetings. So you already have those opportunities, you know, you're, you're already emailing your colleagues, you're already emailing your teachers, you're already presenting for a class, you're already presenting through your department. So engaging in those activities is really important to develop your skillset to succeed.

Thank you so much, Michael. What you said was really important and I do feel like is really important to step outta your comfort zone, especially what Dan, Dan said. Um, I'm gonna move on to the next question, which is, I used to think blank about political engagement, but now I think blank. Sanjana, would you like to answer

This? Thank you. Um, so I'm Bengali. Um, and that probably doesn't mean a lot to people who don't know the culture of, um, of, or like Bengali culture, but for me that meant that, um, from a young age I grew up surrounded by political discussions. Um, and even though my mom who is in a citizen here in can't vote, I was constantly being engaged in like political discussion and like, um, conversation about societal constructs or like, um, political theory and that kind of thing. Um, and so I love debate. I grew up loving, um, debate and like just all of the things involved with the concept of politics. However, that didn't mean that I had a good, um, conception of what engaging in politics looked like. I thought it was competing with people edging your opponent out, like marketing yourself as this like better number one candidate.
And I hated all of that. I did not wanna do that. Um, but I didn't, I didn't even, I talk about my, um, start of being politically engaged now, um, being in seventh grade when I first did that, when I first became a community activist, I did not consider it being politically engaged at all. Um, but it's been recently that I've realized what the true meaning of political engagement is, and it's really just standing up for what you're passionate in, uh, about, um, making sure that your voice is heard, um, and any kind of change that you're advocating for in your community. And I think that that was really powerful for me to come to terms with because now I can look for more opportunities in the field of political engagement, um, that I might be more interested in because I've gotten past looking at political engagement as is kind of stigmatized like race of who is the best person. Um, and that was not something that I personally lined up with. I lined up more with, um, you know, communicating about the things that I felt passionate about. Um, and so that was the kind of misconception that I had, but was Right. And recently.

Speaker 4 (27:05):
Thank you so much

Speaker 8 (27:07):
Sanjana.

Speaker 4 (27:09):
Uh, okay, I'm gonna move on to the, can I add something to that or, Yeah, of course. And then open up if anyone else wanted to add. But I definitely agree with what Sanjana is saying with, um, you know, maybe when I started as well, I didn't consider it politically engaged, like being politically engaged. To me it seems something more like, okay, like kind of what Damon was saying, like, this is my responsibility, like I'm supposed to be speaking for my community. But I think when I first thought about like anything political, I was like, okay, people in offices with nice, like business outfits and like suits and adults and old people, which <laugh> no offense, but that's just what came to mind. But, you know, when I did start getting involved, I was like, wait, I am a little bit right, but also, you know, there should be these youth, youth and these spaces as well.

Speaker 4 (27:57):
And I think, um, I also realized that, you know, political, political engagement wasn't only just showing up to lobby or showing up to these congress people or city council or the county, it also came in the form of art, in the form of, um, journalism, VI production, all these different types of like modes of, I guess, activism in their own, in their own way. And I realized that when I also part, I was part of this, um, mural that I, that I was part of in like sophomore year or junior year. And it was to address the school to prison pipeline and we did this beautiful mural, um, and on it was a message and it says I am impossible. And then it says, um, hashtag school not prisons. And I think that's a very important message to send out to people in my community as well coming from, um, Southeast San Diego.

Speaker 4 (28:50):
Um, it's a place where it's over policed and youth feel like that's, that's where they're gonna end up. And I think that that message is so important that you are possible and you're able to, you know, break those cycles, break those barriers and be politically engaged and be disruptive of these systems and, um, make a change for your community. I think now that's what I think of when I think of political engagement. It's not just like, Oh, these fancy buildings, I can't step in there, I don't belong there. It's like, no, I'm gonna
go in there and I'm gonna, you know, um, assert my place and you know, let them know that I'm here. So that's what I think of now if anybody else wants to add on.

Speaker 1 (29:26):
Um, I think my perception going into any sort of political engagement is that why aren't people making a change? I think there's a lot of frustration of why are our politicians not doing what they said they were gonna do? Why is all of this progress that we know would be beneficial not happening? I think as I've become more involved, it's really hard to understand the complexities of an issue. Um, when you're, you're not necessarily sitting on the outside but not active in the change. There's so many people that are gonna be affected. There's so many people you have to consider. There's so much prep work that goes into any change that it can, it sometimes is complete disengagement. It sometimes is a lack of responsibility and it's sometimes just a long process. Uh, and so I think being cognizant of that in action doesn't mean in action. Um, it can be more just observing people in a certain way. Um, and that change does take time. So I think that's probably what I've learned.

Speaker 3 (30:28):
Would

Speaker 7 (30:28):
You like that? Yeah, I'd just like to add on to what Diana said, uh, which I definitely do agree that, um, political activism can, um, can look in in many, many different forms, uh, like the arts, like video production. And I think that's beautiful. But I think I'd also like to offer a different perspective. Um, the idea that politics is filled with big fancy buildings and offices and people in suits, but there's also no reason that youth can't be in big fancy offices be in suits. So why not both? Why not both have them? Um, why shouldn't they be, why, why separate youth only into those spaces? We really want to break that stigma of youth can only express themselves through art and video production. Let's have them express themselves through politics, through suits, through businesses and through big buildings.

Speaker 3 (31:20):
Thank you so much you guys. And yes, change starts with advocacy and it's very important that we make that room for our young people to make, to hear their voice, to make sure their voices are heard and make sure there's room for that advocacy. I'm gonna move on to the next question, which is, how do you take care of your own mental health and energy while putting in the work it takes to be politically engaged? Diana, would you like to answer this question?

Speaker 4 (31:45):
Uh, yeah. I think, you know, um, as everyone's mentioning, it's a lot of work to be politically engaged and to be an advocate for whatever issue you may be advocating for. And it does take a toll on you. So I think, you know, prioritizing your mental health is very important. I think that a lot of the time when I was doing the um, advocacy for transportation, I was like, this is taking so long, why is no change being made? And I think that's a common thing that we also hear here in the panel and just in general. Um, but I had to remind myself a lot of the time like, why am I doing this? Why am I fighting for a transportation? And I think like when you think of a young person, you're like, why are they talking about transportation? I think it's such a like weird place to start at.

Speaker 4 (32:26):
But for me, I knew that in my community transportation was so important and I knew that in the name of the program that I was fighting for, it says Youth opportunity passes and I really focus on that opportunity and the youth part because um, in my community, uh, there is a lot of resources, but a lot of the more important jobs or um, offices, buildings are not in my community itself. So I had to get to those places somehow. And uh, I have parents that work two jobs and that are not home or cannot provide that transportation for me. So a lot of the time I was walking to, um, after school practices or after school meetings and that's not safe all of the time. And um, maybe some of the time it's places outside of my community. So I relied on lot, um, public transportation and I knew that it wasn't just me that was using these, um, modes of transportation.

Speaker 4 (33:20):
I always saw classmates friends when I rode the bus to school, sometimes I saw them on the bus as well. So I was like, okay, this is not just the me problem, this is a problem that's for the community. And um, you know, when I did get to see that big win for 18 and under, I was not 18 anymore. So I was like, okay, well that's fine. I know that, you know, um, my siblings will benefit from it, my high school will benefit from it cuz I recently got the opportunity to go present to them. And um, I, I don't like to bring it up cuz I'm okay Kate, yes, I did this, but you know, there's a lot of people that played part into it. But my teacher was like, okay, raise of hand. How many of you are using these, um, uh, the PNO app for the free transportation passes? And like all of them raised their hand and I was like, Oh wow, I didn't realize that. You know, it's such a big impact that it's creating on my community. So I think just being able to remind myself like, okay, maybe I'm not gonna benefit from it, but you know, everyone else in my community is, but you know, that's not gonna stop me because we're still fighting for 24 and under. So maybe, maybe I'll get it by the time I'm 23. But yeah. Thank you so much, Diana. All right, moving on to the next

Speaker 7 (34:30):
Question. Sorry. Do you,

Speaker 4 (34:32):
Do

Speaker 7 (34:32):
You mind if I, do you mind if I jump in your eyes? Um, I think I'll just be real quick here. I think one of the things that is definitely understated is that juggling school and extracurriculars free time often morphs into a personal time, rather morphs into political activism time. Especially because a lot of these people that are, a lot of adults that are active in political spaces, their job is to have, is to be in these political spaces. They have designated time and they get paid for it. A lot of, a lot of um, uh, youth political engagement opportunities aren't paid for and they don't work well and they don't work with student schedules. And it's really hard for people to expect students to be politically engaged and it's really hard for people to fulfill their political engagement duty if they're not getting paid for it. They're taking their personal time out of it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and one of the hardest things, and one of the most important things that I would recommend is make clear your personal time and make clear your political engagement time. Especially because you're at home time is normally seen as personal time, but your at home time turns into work time. And I think this is something that's not just applicable to Stu students, but applicable to any workplace, especially as we move forward into the age of technology, is making clear that work life balance. Mm-hmm.
Speaker 3 (35:49):
Thank you so much Matthew. That balance is very important. Okay, next question is, adults often are the gatekeepers to political engagement. Why should they invite youth to the table when it comes to political issues? How should they go about inviting you? Damien, would you like to answer this question first?

Speaker 6 (36:07):
Yeah, totally. Um, so I think, um, one of the main things that I heard the NSA and I totally agree with is that youth are very driven and passionate individuals. And I think having, you know, as, as, as you grow older, it's much easier to kind of, you know, get used to the, um, the social, um, world you're in. And so you see these issues but you, you start getting accustomed to them, you work around them. And so, you know, having youth, uh, kind of giving them a see at the table helps not only hold, you know, adults accountable for doing something about these things, but also, you know, it, it really creates that change in itself. Um, if you only have certain demographics, um, of certain ages, then you're gonna have limited solutions. You're not gonna get, um, you know, probably the creative solutions that might actually get things done if you only have people that may, you know, leave this position in five years. Um, and I think that's one of the bigger problems when looking at also like global issues. You know, why are we not solving climate change? Because most of the people in our offices are people who are not gonna be alive by the time climate change hits us <laugh>. But yeah. Thank you.

Speaker 3 (37:12):
Thank you so much Damien. I agree with you. Climate change is very important and we need to focus on that. Okay. Um, Michael, would you like to add on?

Speaker 1 (37:23):
Uh, yeah, I think as a student working in a lot of educational advocacy, I know so much about how classrooms work, uh, and what actually occurs, not what the procedure is supposed to be. Um, so it's kind of blown me away how many times I've been in meetings and uh, for example, the California Healthy Kids Survey is a survey administered by the state that goes into how safe students feel at school, how many times they've seen kids get beat up at their school, um, whether they have someone on campus they can talk with. Um, and that was being taken as this like perfect source of information and people were using it to guide how budgets were gonna be made. And I was explaining like, this is not the perfect resource, uh, from being in the classroom. I know that a lot of students do not take it seriously.

Speaker 1 (38:12):
There's um, a lot of feeling that people are seeing how you're responding. So responding in a perfect way and despite it being kept confidential and anonymous, you're still taking it in a room with 40 other people, <laugh>, um, your teacher's still collecting it from you. So there's still definitely the pressure that if I say this, are there gonna be repercussions for me? Are there gonna be repercussions for my classmates? Are there gonna be repercussions for, for my teacher? And even if you're not worried about that specifically, it can also sometimes feel like, why am I even taking this? Um, and I think that is a lot of perspective from students of how is this actually gonna help me? What change is actually gonna be made? So just saying this is not the perfect resource that, that this is, is information to be considered, but take it with a grain of salt. And that a committee that works for students and has been around so long had never heard that before. And it was because I was the first student ever on that committee. Uh, and I think when you're making decisions about youth and not including youth in that
discussion, you miss out on a lot of information, especially on how things are working, not how they're supposed to be working.

Speaker 3 (39:20):
Thank you so much, Michael. Okay. I'm gonna ask one last question around this off. What's the benefit of being politically engaged now and in the future? Abraham, I'm gonna give this question to you.

Speaker 5 (39:31):
I would like to say, uh, to get it, to get, uh, engaged, you're getting a step ahead because you're looking at problems that are gonna affect us as a youth as a whole in the future, in the long run. So, so you, you're looking at things such as the plant between, uh, LA and San Diego that has all this extra, uh, nuclear energy that's bad and they're trying to find a way what to do with it that might not affect us now, but, but 10 years, 20 years later on when, when we're older and adults now, that's gonna be, uh, something that we're gonna have to be taking into consideration. So I think as a whole, uh, it's, it's basically just we're stepping up and you're, uh, you're realizing that we are the next ones that are gonna be in your position soon, you get, know what I'm saying? So all the politics and all that that's gonna be thrown into our hands. So us being young and taking action now is getting us to step ahead and step forward to moving and making these differences.

Speaker 3 (40:24):
Thank you so much Abraham. I agree. We really need to make sure that we are advocating for these differences because we are going to separate from them if we don't, and I'm gonna open this up to questions. So if any of you guys have any questions, just start your hand.

Speaker 9 (40:42):
I have more of a comment. Um, I just wanna let you guys know how impressed I am with you and encourage, um, and that you have, you do see this as a responsibility. Um, I'm sure you guys witness, you know, like our housing crisis and everything like that, but I'm sure you all have peers who are either living in a car or staying in a relationship because they can't afford to leave or they have way too many roommates than what's normal. So, um, like you said, the the things that are really gonna be affecting us in five to 10 years is up to you guys. You guys are gonna be in those spots. So thank you.

Speaker 3 (41:17):
Thank you so much.

Speaker 10 (41:19):
Um, so kind of similar, you guys all really inspire me and I, it was really important for me to hear what all of you had to say cuz I learned a lot today also. But, um, I was actually wondering do you have any other protests or like anything or organizing that's coming

Speaker 8 (41:32):
Up this year? Um, thank you so much for your question. Um, I have, I'm not sure if like we have stuff planned out just, um, as of right now because it's so early in the year, but I definitely like can, um, if I, if anything comes up, I could, I don't know how to get in contact with you, but I could let you know, I we're
trying to figure out how to like expand our, um, like, um, disseminating the information about strikes and stuff. So, um, definitely I can let you know if you're interested. Yeah, thank you so much.

Speaker 11 (42:03):
I just wanted to add to that this is one of the most, um, like most amazing panels or, you know, at being in attendance here has been just incredible because I just want you to know, I'm, I'm one of the old people, the power is here, the power, the change, the ideas, the diversity and the depth of thought is here. So do not listen to the old people, uh, don't listen to the gatekeepers. Truly understand that. We also realize that the power is there, so never stop yourself. But I just wanna say that all of you individually, I just, I just know it are going to be extremely impactful. So keep that focus, uh, keep that sincerity and just know that we bow onto it. Amazing.

Speaker 8 (42:53):
Thank you.

Speaker 12 (42:54):
Yeah, and I would echo that I, you, you are in the present moment being impactful too, so it's not just future, it's like right now. And I would ask a couple things. One, I have a wish for this event that this had been recorded. Um, I teach high school, it is being recorded. I would love to see this cuz I would love to show it to my students. I have one of my students here with me. Um, and so we would love to share this with my entire class. And then what do you think as a panel would be the issues that students your age, um, what are some of the hottest issues that they sh should be looking at or could become involved in?

Speaker 6 (43:38):
Could I answer that? Of course. Great. So this is actually one thing that I really wanna talk to in the panel. Um, I think it's overall a distinct lack of representation in terms of the fact that many of us are 16, 17, 18, we've paid taxes, we've worked for this country, and yet we're, we're, we're only given virtual representation. Something that if we go back and just look at United States, history has proved to be ineffective. Um, you see that, you know, we, we say that we want change and we advocate for this change, but we're only represented through consideration. Um, because you know what can a kid now yeah, what, what, what could I know, um, that, um, the ever powerful adults don't know. And so I think it just seeing that it takes so much work for any of us to get anything remotely done is something that I think youth across the board struggle with. Can

Speaker 1 (44:30):
I add onto that yourself? Of course. I think a really simple solution is that to start communicating with youth, because I know there's always the joke that like teachers here last from the board of education or parents here last from the school, students get nothing. We never get any communication, so we're always walking into things blind. Um, and we'll hear other people like teachers, parents, administration talking about things and we're supposed to leap in and show how, um, impressive we are in the, the progress that we've made to events and tests and all sorts of other things that we haven't heard of before. So whenever you are communicating and there are youth even remotely involved, communicate with the youth, we really appreciate just to hear what we're getting ourselves into, what we can expect, how we can prepare.

Speaker 7 (45:23):
Thank you so much you guys. Sorry. Um, of course this question is like gold for me and some of those responses too. So, um, first I think the biggest thing, and like Damien said, the biggest thing that students I think are focused on is student engagement. And uh, I think one of the biggest solutions for that, um, is just a change of mindset. You know, thinking of us not as representatives or students but as partners, as problem solvers, as communicators, as people that can work with you. I think making that change in mindset and think of us less of as people over there and more as partners in your line of work is gonna go a huge distance. And I think that part of that, again, going back to communication, part of that is it's hard to remove this us versus them mentality that a lot of um, that a lot of is very common in today's political spheres. It's, it's hard for students to remove that us versus them mentality. If us knows nothing and they know everything, it creates this cultural divide that really does not help in any way.

Speaker 2 (46:36):
Thank you. Can we all give our wonderful panelists,

Speaker 2 (46:45):
You were each so incredible and love to have you guys on our can ask him a couple questions. Um, thank you everyone who attended this piano. It is recorded so, um, we will have a transcript, uh, it's just recorded audio, but we can have that transcript free so you can share with your students. Um, the next panel in this room is at one 15. Uh, but yeah, hope you enjoy the rest of your day and make sure you tag us on any social media posts and we'll we share and share all our, uh, panels and events for coolest and thank you.

Speaker 8 (47:24):
This is so

Speaker 1 (47:25):
Good.

Speaker 2 (47:26):
Good.

Speaker 7 (47:26):
Did you go? I

Speaker 4 (47:27):
Go now, but I went to Google.

Speaker 2 (47:29):
Oh,

Speaker 7 (47:30):
Okay. Cool. Board member. Same time as are so cool. I'm so shoes.