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College students in Florida and Washington D.C. will not let their votes be taken for granted!

Students from George Washington University in Washington D.C., Georgetown University in Washington D.C., and Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida have joined forces to address the federal candidates.

Circulating a petition virally on the Internet and physically through college campuses, these Chapters have produced over 1,500 signatures. Considering that Florida was decided by less than 600 votes in 2000, the youth vote is of clear concern to the candidates.

The students' petition addresses the failure of the Federal Government to provide adequate aid to students struggling to cope with skyrocketing tuition costs. They are demanding that the Bush and Kerry campaigns issue clear and coherent statements detailing how they plan to update unsubsidized federal loans offered to students.

In addition to circulating this petition online, students have been gathering at local restaurants to discuss the federal and state races. The Capitol Grounds Café (2100 Pennsylvania Ave, NW) in Washington D.C. and Vinny's Pizza (3013 Yamato Road) in Boca Raton are offering discounts to students who check out the petition.

On Thursday, from 10am to 1pm, students in D.C. will receive a free pastry from Capitol Grounds just for checking out the petition.

The motivating force behind this movement is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, voter engagement organization called Youth04 (www.youth04.org). Using the best of the Internet and grass roots mobilization techniques, Youth04 works to engage young people in local and national politics.

Politics Online said that the Youth04 website "could very well be the website that picks up on the Internet energy where Dean for America left off." Youth04 has been covered by *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *HI Magazine*, *The Dominion Post*, and many university publications.

Youth04 has developed chapters at universities across the United States. Chapters in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia have been circulating their own petitions and reminding the candidates of the importance of the youth vote, especially in swing states.

36% of college students voted in the 2000 election and even more promise to turn out this year yet they are systematically denied access to national discussions of politics and policy. Youth04 seeks to change this by encouraging young voters to discuss the issues amongst themselves and to communicate their concerns with their politicians.

A Note about Youth04: Youth04 is a joint product of The Center for Democracy and Technology, The Johns Hopkins University Washington Center for the Study of American Government, and The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars. Executive Director, Dr. David Anderson, recently published *Youth04: Young Voter, the Internet, and Political Power* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).