

Editorial:

We got the power

Rider students didn't need another reason to vote in this election, but they will get it anyway. This year, Lawrenceville's fate could be determined by those who live too far away from Rider to vote in their hometown.

On Nov. 2, Rider students who are registered to vote in the town will have the ability to decide whether or not a pay-to-play ordinance is enacted. If passed, the law would help to curb government corruption by limiting the amount of money professionals can contribute to politicians' campaigns in return for no-bid contracts.

The issue has become a controversial one due to the war in Iraq. In order to reward Halliburton for their support, President Bush granted a no-bid contract to the company, putting them in charge of the country's rebuilding. This sparked tremendous outrage, as many other companies that had planned on vying for the job never even got a chance to make a bid. Furthermore, Vice-President Dick Cheney formerly served as Halliburton's CEO. The government was playing favorites.

The practice of awarding no-bid contracts is a dangerous one. Competition is a fundamental aspect of the American marketplace. It forces companies to improve the quality of their products and helps to drive prices down. However, by awarding contracts to their supporters without first allowing competitors to vie for the position, politicians are undermining this system. Instead of being concerned about the quality and accessibility of services in our capitalist market, they are worried only about themselves and their supporters. If this practice is allowed to continue, we will all be shooting ourselves in the proverbial foot.

The power to change this rests in the hands of a group of Rider students. Those who are registered to vote in Lawrenceville can vote for the ordinance, thus ending the practice in this area. It is a small step toward a greater goal, but it is a step nonetheless. Before the issue can be addressed to the entire nation, it must develop momentum on a smaller scale. This group of residents can help to bring this about.

This issue is also another example of how individual votes do make a difference. Many people are under the impression that their vote doesn't count for anything. After all, such a large number of votes are cast in the presidential election every four years that it may be impossible to tell whether a single person has any impact at all on the results. However, far fewer votes are cast in local politics. By simply going to the polls and voting on Tuesday, students could have a tremendous impact on local policies.

Lawrenceville isn't the only area allowing registered voters to decide on local ordinances. The ballots of most townships feature similar questions about local policy. So, even if home is a short drive away, you still have the power to influence your community. Don't let local officials have all the fun. Get out and make an impact in your hometown.

Individual votes are not powerless. They not only have the ability to determine the leader of the free world, but also how local communities are governed. We have the power this year, and we must be willing to use it.

This weekly editorial expresses the majority opinion of The Rider News editorial board and is written by the Opinion Editor.

The Health Center will be providing free HIV testing on Nov. 4 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., by appointment only.

Call x. 5060 to set up a visit.



The Issues Explained:

Electoral College should be outlawed

Who will be President for the next four years? The answer to that question lies with the Electoral College.

The college works in an interesting way that most Americans admit in polls they don't fully understand. Each state is given an amount of "electoral votes" based on population. When you go out to vote on Nov. 2, you are not directly voting for Kerry or Bush. You are actually voting for "the electors" for Kerry or Bush.

The phrase "electors for" Kerry or Bush will appear on the ballot above the candidates. The electors are chosen by the parties in each state. Each state party's amount of electors is based on the number of Senators (2) and the number of Representatives that each state has. Each state's electors meet in their state capitals in November and cast their vote for president.

The electoral votes are then sealed and sent to the President of the Senate. The winner of the most electoral votes wins the election. For example, if the winner of the popular vote in Jersey is Kerry, the democrats would send their electors to the state's capital to cast their vote for John Kerry.

What's the problem with this system? Well, there are quite a few. First, there are people called

"Faithless Electors"

who are electors who can purposely vote against their party's candidate at their state's capital. In some states, this is against the law. However, in West Virginia, one of the Republican Party's electors recently stated that if Bush wins the popular vote in his state, he is going to cast his electoral vote for Kerry. This has occurred, but it typically isn't the case.

However, is this system fair? Yes, everyone should go out and vote because there needs to be a winner of the popular vote in each state. But shouldn't we as the people be voting directly for president? This leads us to the 2000 Election and the next problem with the Electoral College. Gore brought in 50,999,897 (48.38 percent) of the national popular vote across all states and Bush gathered 50,456,002 (47.87 percent). Gore was the people's president. Without Florida, Gore was winning in the Electoral College

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