



OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The overarching message of our recent event “**Reclaim Our Country: Empower Citizens to Vote,**” is that **it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to actively work to preserve our democracy, starting with voting in the upcoming midterm election on Nov. 6, 2018.**

The event was presented through the joint sponsorship of Bergen Indivisible for Democracy (BID), NJ 5 Coalition, and Central Unitarian Church, Paramus, on Saturday morning, September 22nd.

“We have taken our Democracy for granted for too long,” said Lori Sackler, BID President. “This event is a great example of the type of work we support and deliver to the community – an inspired collaboration of wonderful local groups and committed citizens working together with a common goal of getting people registered, getting them to vote early, and ultimately getting communities, their families and friends to the polls on November 6th, so that we can all have a chance to voice our wishes and demands from our elected officials.”

PANEL REMARKS

The importance of this message was underscored and confirmed by the panel of four national and community leaders, each representing a unique constituency which needs to show up in November, so that all our voices will be heard: women, blacks, immigrants and Hispanics, and our young people.

They discussed ways each of us can and should become involved:

~ **Helen Archontou, CEO, YWCA Bergen County** – *“Our efforts and energy are focused on young women: to inspire women to show up at the polls, make sure they are educated on the issues and to elect people in office that reflect their values.”*

~ **Johanna Calle, Director, NJ Alliance for Immigrant Justice** – Suggests we get to know what’s going on in our communities, so that we can be better advocates. *“Every election matters. It’s not just names on a ballot. These are people who impact individuals and families in our local communities.”*

~ **Kwesi Chappin, Senior Field Director, Color of Change** – Says nothing beats old school offline organizing, meeting people where they’re at. *“Peer-to-peer texting is effective.”*

~ **Zachary Dougherty, Activist, Students Demand Action** – Their rally in South Jersey was the first Students Demand Action event outside of Florida. Voter registration is their number-one priority. *“When your friends say you’ve got to register to vote, you’re more likely to do it.”* Their main goal is fighting gun violence in EVERY community, not just in schools or affluent areas. How do kids talk to their parents? It’s easier to talk to parents who are ultra-conservative when the issue is school safety. *“It is something where a teenager can say, this is relevant to me. It goes across party lines.”*

CALL TO ACTION

NJ5 Coalition co-founder and activist, Anna Wong, strongly encouraged everyone to actively participate in getting out the vote, canvassing and making calls to promote early voting by mail. **NJ 5 Coalition has set up action days EVERY Saturday and Sunday and EVERY DAY from November 1-6!** *“Do not sit these days out- aside from being critical to our nation’s future, we have fun out there! Ask a friend to try this out with you and team up together.”* They have put together a [“canvassing tutorial”](#) that encourage everyone to see, so that they can volunteer for a “job” within their comfort zone. Go to their central [RSVP](#) link and they will follow up with you with further information.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Dan Cassino, Associate Professor, Political Psychology, at Fairleigh Dickenson University, rounded out the morning’s discussion by reminding us that *“we are living in interesting times”* that put the onus of untangling the chaotic state of things on every person. **The responsibility of ensuring the survival of our democracy belongs to each one of us. The time is NOW.**

By registering people to vote now, you are shaping American politics for years to come.