

MISSING VOTER PROJECT

The South Carolina Progressive Network is working to build a movement for a more democratic, just and equitable state. We believe that when citizens are not engaged in the political process, their government is not responsive to their needs. Toward that end, the Network started the Missing Voter Project in 2004 to teach groups and individuals how to use state-of-the-art tools and strategies to maximize their voter registration and mobilization drives. The MVP is a nonpartisan campaign that seeks to find the nearly 1 million eligible SC citizens who are not registered. Another one million who are registered vote infrequently.

The United States ranks behind 137 other nations — between Armenia and Nigeria — in the percentage of citizens voting. In the 2004, slightly less than half our state's voting-age population turned out for the presidential election, putting South Carolina 42nd in US voter participation. In 2006, for mid-term elections, slightly more than a third showed up at the polls (35 percent).

The MVP is designed to take voter registration beyond traditional party building or drumming up support for a specific campaign or candidate. It is a long-term effort to engage new voters in a larger movement for social change based on citizen empowerment. During its registration drives, the Network will collect information from new voters about the issues important to them, and they will be offered the opportunity to get involved with organizations working on those issues.

The MVP is built on the idea that registering and voting is simply the first step to building power at the grassroots level. Our intention is to create a movement of voters with enough power to help set political priorities that meet their needs rather than the needs of politicians and corporate interests.

The MVP uses the voter registration list and runs it against Census data, which allows us to target blocks of unregistered citizens in neighborhoods across the state to maximize voter registration drives. The data can be sorted for race, income, employment, age and other demographics.

If you or your organization is interested in joining the Missing Voter Project, e-mail network@scpronet.com or call 803-808-3384. We will arrange a free training session and provide materials for you to conduct a registration drive in your community.