

North End Civic Engagement Profile

The 2017 North End Community Economic Development Plan identified the importance of civic engagement and community participation. As a pillar of American democracy, civic engagement combines education and involvement within the democratic process. From going out and voting to actually running for an office, there are many opportunities for a North End resident to meaningfully participate in the democratic process.

The State of Civic Engagement in the North End

One measure of current civic engagement is voter turnout of North End precincts.

Figure 1: Voter Turnout at Federal, State, and Local Levels
2016 General Election

| United States | Ohio | Richland County | Mansfield | North End |
|---------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| 60.2% | 71.33% | 68.60% | 58.84% | 44.24% |

The table above shows the difference in voter turnout levels from the federal level to the local level including the North End. It is noteworthy that the North End has a nearly 30% lower voter turnout rate than the state as a whole. The North End had a turnout 14.6% lower than the city of Mansfield overall. This raises the question why is voter turnout so low?

Figure 2: Voter Turnout Averages by Ward
2016 General Election

| Ward 1 | Ward 2 | Ward 3 | Ward 4 | Ward 5 | Ward 6 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 71.19% | 64.71% | 63.09% | 47.00% | 44.12% | 50.38% |

Wards 4 and 5 make up the North End (refer to the map on page 2). Figure 2 illustrates that Ward 4 and Ward 5 have the lowest percentage of voter turnout in the city of Mansfield.

Figure 3: Voter Turnout by North End Precincts
2016 General Election

| MAN 4-B | MAN 4-C | MAN 4-D | MAN 4-E | MAN 5-B | MAD G |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 48.44% | 36.46% | 51.02% | 47.28% | 38.02% | 59.12% |

Each ward is split into smaller precincts and there are 29 precincts total in Mansfield. Figure 3 shows voter turnout in the six precincts that make up the North End. One thing to note

is that precinct "MAD G" is the precinct of census tract 16 which is actually considered Madison Township.

Figure 4: City of Mansfield Ward Map

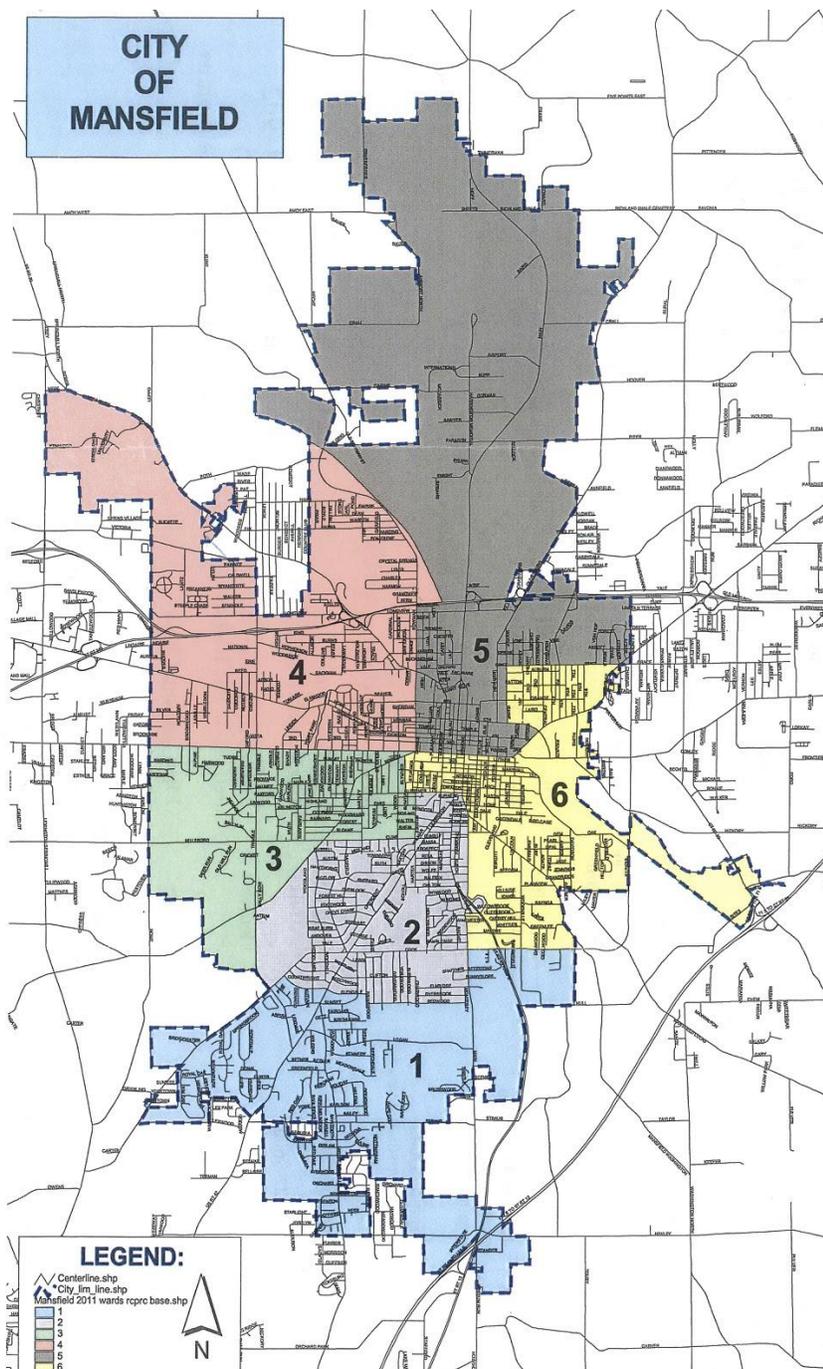


Figure 5: Voter Turnout 2012 and 2016 General Election Comparison

| 2012 Mansfield Turnout | 2016 Mansfield Turnout | 2012 North End Turnout | 2016 North End Turnout |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 58.29% | 58.84% | 47.06% | 44.24% |

As shown in Figure 5 from the 2012 general election to the 2016 general election, voter turnout on the North End dropped almost 3 percent. One possible explanation is dislike of candidates. A Pew Research Center survey asked registered voters why they did not vote in 2016. The number one reason was “dislike of candidates or campaign issues” (López & Flores, 2017).

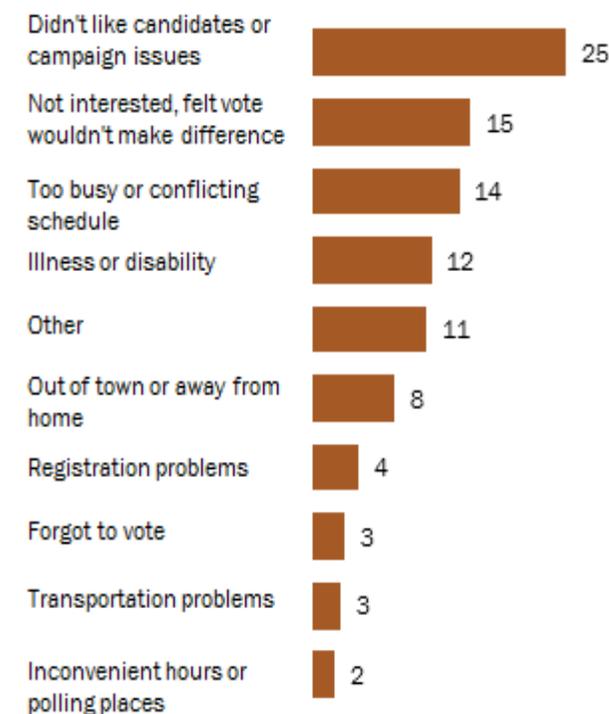
As illustrated in the data above, the North End has the lowest voter turnout rates within the city of Mansfield. The difference in voter turnout throughout Mansfield is alarming. It is essential to understand potential barriers that have led to low civic participation.

Figure 6: Pew Survey Results Chart

Barriers to Democracy and Ways to Address Them

Why registered voters say they did not vote in 2016

Among registered voters who did not vote, % who said main reason was...



Barriers to Democracy come in a wide variety. Some barriers that are likely to affect residents of the North End include voter registration status, voter purge policies, access to information, and apathy.

Voter Registration

Voter Registration is one of the most basic barriers to voting and civic engagement. Eligibility, access to registration materials and knowledge of the registration process are all important aspects of this issue.

Knowledge of the registration process is crucial. The Ohio Department of Education states that a semester of American Government is a graduation requirement. Students at Mansfield Senior High School take this government class either their junior or senior year. However, when looking at the state standards for a government course there is no standard that focuses

Note: "Don't know," "Refused," "Bad weather conditions" and "No response" not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2016 Current Population Survey, November Supplement.

on the registration process. For students around the ages of 17-18, access to this information can make or break an individual’s desire to be civically engaged. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2010) recognizes that educating young voters can help individuals make voting a habit that will continue throughout life and that registration is the first “hurdle” of voting.

Felony disenfranchisement and myths about eligibility can act as a barrier for many individuals. As described in the 2017 North End Community Economic Development Plan, mass incarceration and ex-offender reentry are major issues in Ohio. It is Ohio law that an individual convicted of a felony crime is disenfranchised from the vote for their time in prison or jail, however a person dealing with a misdemeanor still has the right to vote. With 69,709 individuals incarcerated in Ohio in the year 2014, it goes to show that this disenfranchisement affects a sizable population (NECIC, 2017). Unlike some states, Ohio does restore the right to vote once an individual is no longer incarcerated. The restoration of voting rights is important, however there is misinformation around the reinstatement of these rights. There is no system in place that alerts an individual when their voting rights have been restored. A common misbelief for people is “Well, I have a record so I can’t vote anymore.” This myth must be addressed.

Figure 7: NECIC Solutions to Address Voter Registration

| Registration Issue | NECIC Solution |
|---------------------------|--|
| Felony Disenfranchisement | Provide accurate information about the policies of disenfranchisement to residents. |
| Increasing Registration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Registering Temp2Higher Job Seekers during orientation. ● Taking registration forms to events and NECIC programs. ● Supporting Universal Voter Registration ● Civics based mini-module to address youth engagement. |

Voter Purge

In June of 2018, the United States Supreme Court upheld a controversial Ohio voter purge law. Ohio has implemented a process that makes voting a “use it or lose it” right. If a

registered voter does not vote in two years they are sent a notice to their home to verify their residency, if the resident does not confirm their address and then doesn't vote for another four years they lose their registration status. This purging policy is aggressive with 840,000 people removed from the rolls since 2011. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor believes that this policy will “in the worst-case scenario [prevent] people from voting at all” (Totenberg, 2018). While people are able to re-register, they are not formally given notice when they are taken off of the voting rolls. This means that an individual who shows up to the polls without being warned that they are unregistered will have to utilize a provisional ballot or will lose the right to vote completely.

Figure 8: NECIC Solution to Address Ohio Voter Purge Laws

| Issue | NECIC Solution |
|-------------|---|
| Voter Purge | If a resident who was registered states that they haven't voted in a while - direct them to the Board of Elections Site to check their registration status. |

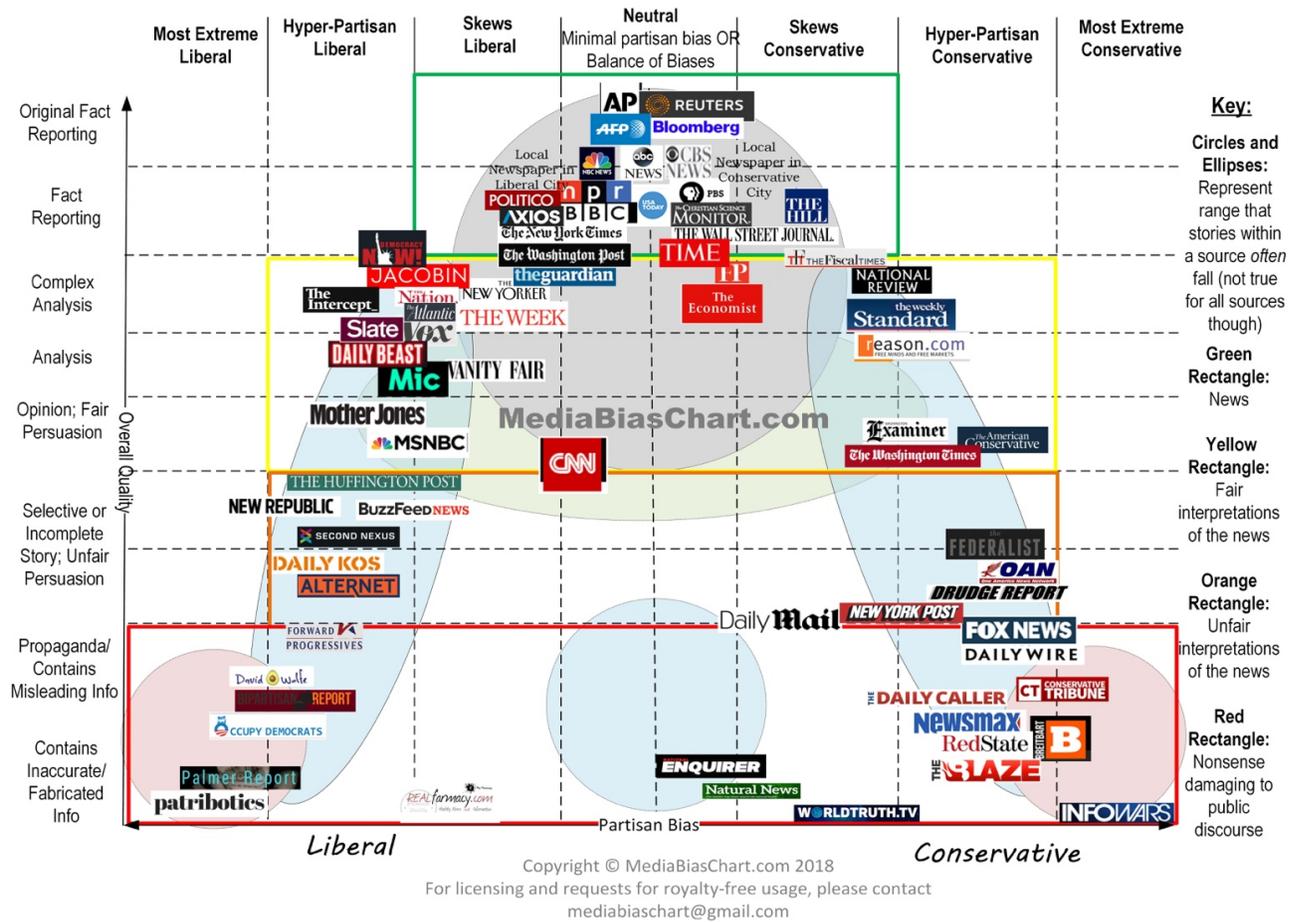
Access to Information

Residents need access to information about local aspects of democracy. Information about the voting process includes but is not limited to information about registration, polling locations and polling times. The office of the Secretary of State as well as the Richland County Board of Elections is largely responsible for the circulation of information around voting. While information is available to answer questions like “what is my polling location?” sometimes the material available is confusing. For example, utilizing the precinct maps available through the Richland County Board of Elections can be difficult. The maps lack labeling on major roads and have no cardinal directions which makes it difficult to understand what the maps represent. For someone looking for easy access to this information the confusing maps could cause a potential voter to become disinterested in voting. While compiling information for this report, I attempted to contact heads of major parties in Richland county regarding precinct committees. I did not receive a reply. This raises questions of what is public information and who has a right to it?

Another aspect of access to information is knowledge of the Democratic process. This is particularly important for youths, but it is not limited to that population. Only 34% of Americans are able to name the three branches of government: Executive, Legislative and Judicial (Meyer,

2016). Knowledge of the democratic process includes understanding the different levels of government, knowing how to cast a ballot, and having an understanding of your rights as a citizen and what role you play in the democracy.

Figure 9: Media Bias Chart



The dissemination of public information regarding candidates, platforms and issues is a significant factor in voter turnout, apathy and partisan polarization. An individual must locate and evaluate information about candidates, issues, and platforms. This information is filtered through the media. As of 2011, there are 6 media conglomerates that own 90% of media in America. These conglomerates are the result of “massive deals and rapid globalization” (Chomsky, 1993). This global media system has major effects on culture and politics. This globalization and centralization of power focus on “lifestyle themes and goods and their acquisition; and they tend to weaken any sense of community helpful to civic life” (Chomsky, 1993). Due to a lack of competition among news outlets, the media can “propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them” (Chomsky, 1993). This

propaganda model works to sculpt public opinion and develops dominant ideologies that can benefit corporations over citizens.

Figure 10: NECIC Solution to Address Access to Information

| Issue | NECIC Solution |
|---|--|
| Easy Access to Information about local polling processes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connect with the Richland County Board of Elections to address confusing precinct maps. ● Connect residents to resources provided by the office of the Secretary of State and Richland County Board of Elections. ● Bring back the NECIC “Citizen’s Corner” column and feature information like registration deadlines and City Council bills. |
| Access to Credible Campaign and Ballot Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide residents with the USA.gov “choosing a candidate” guide. ● For local issues, provide a non-partisan platform for candidates and issues at events like Elder Program and Neighbor Up Night. |
| Lack of Knowledge about the Democratic Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host a civics Mini-module through the ROAR program for youths. ● Have Civics themed speakers and information for Elder Programs. |
| Media as a Business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support media reform initiatives |

Understanding Apathy

On the topic of campaign-finance reform David Cole states, “the biggest obstacle to meaningful change [is] public skepticism that anything can be done to fix the problem” (Cole, 2016). Cole was referring specifically to the disconnect between public opinion and action with the Citizens United court ruling. However, the obstacle of public skepticism exists in all aspects of democracy and is linked to apathy. Fifteen percent of registered voters that did not participate in the 2016 election did so because they were “Not Interested, felt vote wouldn’t make a difference” (Lopez & Flores, 2017). People want their voice to matter in democracy and when

they do not believe their voice is heard it can develop into apathy. Apathy leads to low turnout and low turnout leads to systems of unequal representation. Then to complete the cycle, campaign money goes towards “sure-thing voters” instead of those who did not vote therefore ensuring that those who didn’t believe their voice matter before definitely don’t believe it matters now.

Uplifting North End Candidates

As illustrated in Figure 6, the number one reason people gave for not voting in 2016 was the distrust and dislike of candidates and issues (López & Flores, 2017). North End voter turnout went down by about three percent from the 2012 election to the 2016 election. Candidates that are culturally-relevant and connected to North End Community members can help reduce apathy and increase voter turnout. Uncontested State and Local level legislature races are at an all-time high according to a William and Mary report (2014). As a 501c3, NECIC is not allowed to endorse a candidate or a political party. But as a community development corporation with a vision of civic engagement and identifying leaders, we can help make sure that if residents express an interest in running for office they are connected with other organizations and resources that can address their passions. Non-partisan organizations like Run For Office and NationBuilder have developed databases and training resources for free that are available to any individual looking to run for an office. These programs work to lower barriers for potential low-income candidates.

Figure 11: NECIC Solutions to Uplift North End Candidates

| Issue | NECIC Solution |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Distrust and Dislike of Candidates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connect residents with organizations like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ She Should Run ○ Run For Something ○ Run For Office ○ NationBuilder |

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