



## **STRANGE TINDERFELLOWS:**

# **Right-Left Millennial Groups Join Cross-Partisan Open Debate Coalition to Impact Second Presidential Debate**

**ONLINE DAY OF ACTION: Young Democrats of America,  
Young Republican National Federation, Generation  
Progress, & Young Conservatives for Energy Reform Will  
Email Supporters & Dedicate Twitter Accounts to  
Promote [PresidentialOpenQuestions.com](http://PresidentialOpenQuestions.com) Today Through  
Tonight's VP Debate**

**Youth Vote to Play Critical Role in 2016 Election. Participation in Media Critical to  
Political Activation.**

Today, the Young Democrats of America, the Young Republican National Federation, Generation Progress, and Young Conservatives for Energy Reform joined the Open Debate Coalition, urging their members to vote and submit questions at [PresidentialOpenQuestions.com](http://PresidentialOpenQuestions.com).

YDA ([@YoungDems](https://twitter.com/YoungDems)), YRNF ([@YRNF](https://twitter.com/YRNF)), Generation Progress ([@GenProgress](https://twitter.com/GenProgress)), and YC4ER ([@YC4ER](https://twitter.com/YC4ER)) will also participate in an online day of action, using email and twitter to virally promote and encourage their members to participate in this first-of-its-kind, bottom-up debate question platform. ABC and CNN have agreed to receive the 30 most popular questions for consideration in the October 9 presidential town hall debate.

"With changing technology and times, candidates must meet voters where they are, and for millennials --the largest eligible voting block -- that is often online," said **Danielle Glover Young Democrats of America Vice President**. "[PresidentialOpenQuestions.com](http://PresidentialOpenQuestions.com) is an exciting way for young people to engage in the political process because it provides a millennial frame and context to a question and empowers our members to vote for questions on the topics they're concerned about, such as the student debt crisis, reproductive rights, pay equity, and race relations."

"The mass appeal of the Open Debate Coalition is the direct access young voters will receive," said **Matthew Thomas Oberly, Young Republican National Federation communications director**. "Too many times our vote is discussed as a prize possession, but rarely have candidates or debates focused on

the daily issues that young voters face. We're told to wait our turn -- and now it is our turn because millennials have become the largest voting block in the United States for the first time in history."

"There is a tremendous opportunity for candidates in these debates to earnestly address issues that matter to young voters," said **Maggie Thompson, Generation Progress Action Executive Director**. "Debates must be a platform for Millennial voters to hear directly from candidates on their policy concerns, and addressing the issues that young people care about is a major step in increasing turnout and participation among America's largest generation."

"We're excited to be joining the Open Debate Coalition to ensure that the views and interests of the next generation of Americans are represented in the next presidential debate," said **Michele Combs, Young Conservatives for Energy Reform founder and chairman**. "An overwhelming 80% of millennials -- including many young Republicans -- want to transition to renewable energy, but this issue wasn't addressed once in the previous debate. Young voters deserve to be heard on the critical issue of promoting clean energy for our country and being able to participate at [PresidentialOpenQuestions.com](http://PresidentialOpenQuestions.com) helps us have a voice in the room."

"There's a big difference in the way that young people and older generations consume media, and one key factor for young people is whether there is genuine engagement and participation," said **Lilia Tamm Dixon, Open Debate Coalition director**. "ABC and CNN's consideration of top questions voted on at [PresidentialOpenDebates.com](http://PresidentialOpenDebates.com) led millennial groups on the right and left to take this debate seriously and urge their supporters to engage. The ability to have a seat at the table is something unique to this first-of-its-kind effort and we hope it will engage millennials to participate even more politically in November and beyond."

**Millennials are a key demographic for the presidential race.** With 69.2 million adults ages 18 to 35 eligible to vote, young voters are the [largest generational group](#) in the electorate and could play a pivotal role in deciding the election in states like Iowa, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and North Carolina -- where millennials make up over 20% of registered voters.

Recent [polling](#) shows that only 41% of millennials are "absolutely certain" they will vote on Nov. 8, compared to the 75% of voters aged 30 and up. The Guardian [reports](#), "Millennials are such a large voting bloc that increasing their support by 10 points could theoretically double [Clinton's] [two-point lead](#) against Trump in national polls."

Over **1.6** million votes have been cast at [PresidentialOpenQuestions.com](http://PresidentialOpenQuestions.com) on over **9,100** voter-submitted questions. Many issues important to Democratic, Republican, and Independent millennial voters are in the top 30 including climate change, Net Neutrality, LGBTQ rights, economic freedom, student loan debt, and criminal justice reform.

**See below for a sampling of millennial issues in the top 30 questions:**

## As president, What are the steps you will take to address climate change? Merged

Climate change is the greatest existential threat facing the country and the world today. What are three things you will do as President to address the challenges posed by a warming planet?

Submitted by: **Joseph M. from DC**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 12:06 p.m.  
Issue area: **Environment**

## What is your plan to combat climate change & build a green economy? Merged

Many people here in the U.S. and around the world feel climate change is the most important issue facing humanity. Our children's futures are at stake. We need to make changes now!

Submitted by: **Linda R. from MO**  
Sept. 28, 2016, 10:36 a.m.  
Issue area: **Environment**

## How will you support a free and open internet? Merged

Major issues include net neutrality, copyright control, market dominance by incumbents and the privatization of internet governance.

Submitted by: **Arthur S. from TX**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 11:36 a.m.  
Issue area: **Infrastructure & Technology**

## How will you advance anti-discrimination laws for LGBT+ Americans? Merged

Most states have 0 protection laws, and the Federal Government has only the EEOC Ruling, compromising housing, job, & health safety. How will you address opponents who cite fear for religious freedom?

Submitted by: **Natalie L. from NY**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 5:12 p.m.  
Issue area: **Civil Rights**

## Is Climate Change a national security issue? Why or why not? Merged

Many leading security experts view climate as the most important security issues for the coming decades.

Submitted by: **Michael P. from CA**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 11:53 a.m.  
Issue area: **Foreign Policy & Military**

## If elected, would you support the decriminalization or legalization of marijuana



Marijuana is currently a Schedule I controlled substance; however, many States have already taken proactive steps to decriminalize or legalize it.

Submitted by: **Jordan S.**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 11:30 a.m.  
Issue area: **Health**

## What will you do to address the structural inequalities in criminal justice?

I am specifically wondering how you will 1) change policies like minimum sentencing laws that disproportionately incarcerate black Americans, and 2) repair community relationships with law enforcement.

Submitted by: **Julianna A. from NJ**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 2:23 p.m.  
Issue area: **Civil Rights**

## What is your plan to address the mounting student loan debt crisis?



I am 32, and my friends and I have significant loan payments. Others are struggling more - what will you do to help us achieve "The American Dream?" We were told college education was the first step.

Submitted by: **Amanda J. from AZ**  
Sept. 27, 2016, 4:19 p.m.  
Issue area: **Education**

**The Open Debate Coalition was formed during the 2008 election cycle.** It includes: Americans for Tax Reform, the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, FreedomWorks, MoveOn, Faith & Freedom Coalition Founder Ralph Reed, the National Organization for Women, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Color Of Change, Numbers USA, Presente, Young Democrats of America, Young Republican National Federation, Generation Progress, Young Conservatives for Energy Reform, Arianna Huffington, former Romney senior aide Mindy Finn, craigslist founder Craig Newmark, Electronic Frontier Foundation President Cindy Cohn, Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, and many more. (See full list of coalition members [here](#))

## **Background on PresidentialOpenQuestions.com:**

For the first time, the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) has mandated that moderators of the town hall debate ask questions with input from the internet -- not just questions from voters in the physical room. In 2008, [President Obama and Senator McCain](#) endorsed the coalition's call for bottom-up questions, but the CPD did not incorporate the idea until this year.

"The commission was watching closely as the Open Debate Coalition tested out their innovative bottom-up question submission and voting platform in the primaries this year, and we were impressed with the results," said **Mike McCurry, Co-Chair of the Commission on Presidential Debates**, "This year's presidential debate moderators will have a rich pool of voter-submitted questions they can draw on that carry greater weight because they are backed by votes from the American people."

**Top ABC and CNN debate producers had meetings recently with Open Debate Coalition Director Lilia Tamm Dixon, Americans For Tax Reform President Grover Norquist, and Progressive Change Campaign Committee Co-Founder Adam Green.** This followed over a year of engagement between the coalition and CPD in advance of the historic [announcement](#) that town hall moderators must ask questions with input from the internet.

The Open Debate Coalition has successfully held open debates in the 2013 special election for Congress in Massachusetts and in the 2016 U.S. Senate [debate](#) in Florida. Between the two open debates, more than 2,500 questions were submitted and over 450,000 votes were cast. The Florida debate received over half a million views and was aired on C-SPAN several times. The AP [reported](#), "Both candidates said they enjoyed the format...saying they were more substantive than a typical debate would have been."

###