



Press Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOUTHERN ARIZONA TEACHERS MORE THAN DOUBLE STATE'S GENERAL TURNOUT FOR MAY 17 SPECIAL ELECTION

Tucson Values Teachers and Expect More Arizona Continue Voter Engagement Initiative with Teachers

TUCSON, Ariz. – Southern Arizona teachers continue to turnout at the polls in higher numbers than the general public. Following the “This Teacher Voters 4 Education” campaign run by Tucson Values Teachers (TVT) and Expect More Arizona (EMA), election data shows that teachers in the five participating school districts turned out to vote at 66 percent—34 points higher than Arizona voters as a whole. Pima County, by comparison, turned out at 38 percent.

Katie Rogerson, Interim Executive Director of Tucson Values Teachers said, “*Teachers have always been role models in our community. The high turnout of these educators in the Special Election just further illustrates their commitment to Southern Arizona and to education in this state. We hope all voters follow their example and make education a top priority when they go to the polls on Nov. 8.*”

This voter engagement initiative encourages Southern Arizona teachers to vote and to make education a top priority when they do. For the 2016 project, five local school districts have partnered with TVT and EMA for the Special Election, the Primary Election, and the General Election: Marana Unified School District, Sahuarita Unified School District, Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson Unified School District, and Vail Unified School District. As part of this initiative, teacher ambassadors at each school site have worked closely with TVT and EMA to provide leadership on the project, raise awareness of elections and issues, and help create a culture of voting at his or her campus.

“*This project has encouraged more of our young teachers to register to vote. I had one teacher that took the pledge to vote and then she went online and registered immediately,*” said Jill VanAsdlan, a teacher at Cottonwood Elementary School in Vail. “*I feel that all people, not just teachers, should exercise their right to vote. It is important to let your voice be heard even if the outcome is not what you had so desired.*”

Teacher ambassadors are provided professional training, project support, materials, and specific opportunities for educators to get involved by voting. Ambassador trainings for the General Election start today for Vail Unified School District and Sunnyside Unified School District. Members of the press are encouraged to contact TVT or EMA to attend a training session and meet with the teacher ambassadors.

Krista Fields, from Vail Unified School District, serves as the teacher ambassador at Sycamore Elementary. She said, “*I believe the project has been a reminder of the importance of a teacher’s voice outside of the classroom. Regardless of how teachers vote, they are practicing values of leadership and responsibility they instill in their students each day.*” She went on to say, “*People we meet every day make the statement, ‘Oh, you teachers do such a great job and don’t get paid enough. I could never do what you do!’ Yet when it comes down to voting for education, teachers and students are not always at the forefront of their minds. Teachers need a voice when it comes to voting, and most often it begins with their own.*”

The 2016 initiative is an expansion of the 2014 pilot project with TUSD, which resulted in an increase in teacher turnout for the General Election despite low turnout throughout the state. In fact, the margin between the identified teachers and the overall voter universe in Pima County increased by 22 percent.

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Tucson Values Teachers (TVT) is a business-education partnership that is dedicated to raising the economic standing and respect levels for teachers across Southern Arizona. TVT’s mission is to attract and retain the highest quality teachers through programs that invest, respect and reward all teachers. The organization recognizes that the economic health of the region is directly tied to teacher quality and is committed to creating an education-first community. For more information, visit www.tucsonvaluesteachers.org or call (520) 327-7619.

Expect More Arizona is a statewide nonpartisan education advocacy organization working to build a movement of Arizonans in support of world-class education for all children. Expect More Arizona accomplishes this work by raising awareness of critical education issues and encouraging high expectations for all children; mobilizing parents to be involved and voters to get more engaged, and fostering collaboration between community leaders and organizations around key advocacy issues. Visit ExpectMoreArizona.org to learn more and join the movement.