

Ethan Sonneborn can't drive but he can run for governor

1 Ethan Sonneborn has a message for you: Get involved in politics and make a difference in the world.

2 Ethan won't be spending his summer break traveling or hanging out at the pool. He will be campaigning to become Vermont's youngest governor. Family members weren't surprised when he decided to run, because he was always passionate about politics. Ethan says they are still adjusting but remain supportive of him.

3 But how can a kid who isn't old enough to vote run for governor? He did his homework! Last year, Ethan had to look up Vermont's constitution for a seventh-grade class assignment and noticed that there was no age requirement for governor. (Kansas is the only other state not to have an age requirement for governor.) That summer, he decided to put his name on the ballot.

4 The Democratic primary in Vermont will be held Aug. 14. If Ethan wins, he will face the current governor, Republican Phil Scott, on Nov. 6.

5 Ethan's focus is on improving health care, schools and the economy. He says these are things that will affect young people's futures in a big way. He has become a superstar in his town of Bristol. Even with all the fame and hard work, he's still a kid who enjoys running, playing basketball and fishing. Get to know Ethan and learn about the start of his political career at 13.

6 **Q: When did you become passionate about politics?**

A: I was around 5, and we have this townwide yard sale. I got an encyclopedia of American history, and one thing I was fascinated by was the concept of coalition-building, which a lot of people in that book used. People like Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King (Jr.). So I was really impressed with the idea that you can bring people from all walks of life together to achieve one common goal.

7 **Q: How are you balancing school and running a campaign?**

A: I do an OK job keeping up. But it is about finding a balance, and in the beginning I struggled to

find it. But now I think I am in a good place where I am accomplishing everything I need to on both fronts.

8 **Q: How do you plan on convincing adults to vote for you?**

A: There is a common thread about people of all ages, and that is that they want change. I am a safe candidate and I am fighting the status quo, and that is something that appeals to a lot of people regardless of my age or theirs.

9 **Q: Which U.S. president do you look up to the most?**

A: I can't choose just one! Abraham Lincoln ... Franklin D. Roosevelt, and I'm going to have to go with Barack Obama.

10 **Q: What do you want to tell kids who can't run for office in their state?**

A: What I would like to see is more young people getting involved in politics. Even if they can't vote or run, that's OK, they can still be involved in politics. They can find issues or candidates they are passionate about and help make real change. Go volunteer for a candidate, even if it's just for your town's board. Go help knock on doors.

11 **Q: Do you encourage people your age to get into politics if they find a way as you did?**

A: Yes. Absolutely, do it. Because young people have been told to be seen and not heard, and it got us to a point where we have a climate-change crisis, a job crisis, a health-care crisis, a gun-violence crisis and an education crisis. We face real problems, and I think if we let young people take the lead on these issues, we will be much better off.

By Dara Elasfar

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