



**The League of Young Voters** empowers young people nationwide to participate in the democratic process, with a focus on non-college youth and youth from low-income communities and communities of color. The League makes civic engagement relevant by meeting young people where they live, working on issues that affect their lives, and providing them with tools, training, and support to become active participants in the civic process. Founded in 2003, the League now stands as one of the strongest nonpartisan youth civic engagement organizations in the country.

As we enter 2009, the League of Young Voters believes the Obama administration faces a great opportunity to implement policies that address several key issues that will not only improve the quality of life for young Americans but also secure a prosperous future for our country as a whole.

### **Green-collar Jobs**

Our constituents are motivated by the idea of bringing new jobs into their communities, many of which have been decimated by the collapse of manufacturing in the Mid-west and Northeast. At the same time, many are not aware of the serious implications of climate change. Green jobs allow us to engage our constituents around economic issues while educating them about the environment. The Obama administration can take a major step by providing full funding for the Green Jobs Act of 2007 and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.

### **Access to Higher Education**

A quality, affordable education is the right of all young people in our society. Increasing funding for higher education programs for students—coupled with efforts to ensure that this funding is there when students apply for it—will help give students from underrepresented communities access to post-secondary education. Our successful track record centers around our work in Maine to pass "Opportunity Maine" in 2006, a student debt relief program that provides access to higher education, while creating incentives to retain graduated students. This program can be modeled in other states suffering from brain drain such as Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The Obama administration can champion this cause by enacting federal policy to make higher education more accessible and affordable to all Americans.

### **Juvenile Justice Reform/Urban Violence**

An alarming number of young people are currently incarcerated—most of whom are non-violent offenders and youth-of-color. We believe that America needs policy to reform juvenile criminalization, emphasizing a system of rehabilitation and prevention. The Obama administration can help address this crisis by enacting the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education (Youth PROMISE) Act.

### **Youth Leadership Development**

If our work over the last five years as an organization has taught us anything, it is the importance and enduring value of developing service driven leaders, particularly in the communities we target. We cannot implement the policies we need to ensure the prosperity and security of our country in the long term without also preparing a diverse pool of young people to lead with ethical and visionary stewardship. The Obama administration could be the cornerstone of this movement by developing a national program that empowers our future leaders and promotes community and public service.