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Focus on Florida Not Going Away

In looking ahead to 2020, it's clear that our status as bellwether swing state is in no danger of going away. As the third largest state in the union and a quickly changing electorate, we will again draw the attention of politicians and pollsters with projections and predictions about our role in electing the future leaders of our country. We have secured our place in the spotlight by having over 13 million voters, but also by continuing to have elections with narrow 1% margins for winning candidates, by being one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states, and by having a nearly equal distribution of voters registered Democrat and Republican.

Voting trends for the state predict change for the tried and true recipe that thrusts us into the spotlight. The 2020 Election Cycle for Florida will have the added ingredient of the sharpest increase in voters registered with No Party Affiliation or with a Minor Party Affiliation. Neither major party can still claim the majority of the voters in the state, a factor attributable, in part, to a major shift in the age makeup of Florida's population.

Beginning in 2018, the number of younger voters (18 - 53 years old) surpassed the state's older population by comprising 52 percent of Florida's total registered voters. Not only did they bump the numbers, they brought with it the impact of typically registering with No Party Affiliation. This combination will certainly reinforce (if not amplify) Florida's reputation of being fertile ground for candidates hoping to influence voters. The pattern of registering without party affiliation is also reflected in Florida's racially and ethnically diverse population, which compared to other states, comprises a larger portion of our state's population.

The 2020 stakes are high, and Florida has no shortage of statistics to jeopardize our swing state status. The stew in the melting pot just got thicker with the addition of an engaged younger population with the diversity and number to tip the scales. It will all be a mystery though unless voter turnout for this age group keeps pace with the increase in voter registration. At this point, it's an unsolved mystery that will likely command attention from both sides of the aisle.

