

HALEY TALKS TRUTH



The Future of the Republican Party Depends on Mentorship

by Haley Barkman

2026 Lincoln Day Speech Contest Champion

According to FairVote, young people are significantly less likely to vote than older generations. Citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 consistently turn out at rates more than ten points lower than voters over 30. Too often, we talk about this statistic with frustration, but frustration alone will not build the future of the Republican Party. Young people must be invited.

Last month, I wrote about what I wish older conservatives understood about Gen Z. The next question is how we are to rally my generation?

Some organizations (you could probably name a few) are already doing this well through youth outreach, volunteer programs, internships, and community involvement. The problem is that many young people simply do not know these opportunities exist. I did not know about opportunities in Washington until this year, when I found them through the Lincoln Day speech contest.

If Gen Z is craving connection, then relationships are the best way to engage them:

First, meet Gen Z where they already are. Volunteer in youth ministry, local nonprofits, schools, or community organizations. Many of these groups struggle to keep volunteers after college and beyond, which leaves younger people without consistent mentorship from older adults.

Second, invite Gen Z personally. It has been so meaningful to me that I have been invited into Republican spaces! Invite young people to events. Ask them to coffee. Invest in them personally. Most young people will respond far more to relationships than to political messaging. When you live out strong values with consistency and integrity, young people notice. They want examples worth following.

Finally, include Gen Z in meaningful ways. Do not treat them like background decoration for campaign photos but instead give them responsibility. Encourage them to organize events, volunteer, speak up, and contribute ideas. If they feel genuinely valued, many of them will eagerly step forward.

The future of the Republican Party will be built through mentorship, relationships, and strong, Republican men and women willing to invite young people into meaningful community and responsibility

