

# STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

MASS. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS USE VIDEOS TO REACH GUV CANDIDATES

By Colleen Quinn

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STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, JUNE 17, 2014....A woman pours change into a jar, and a quarter drops on the floor in the opening shot of a video produced by Natick High School students Addison Dlott and Kideest Assefa-McNeil. In another shot, a woman searches for change in between her car seats.

Viewers hear a typewriter clicking the sentences, “For the average person, \$2.10 seems like an insignificant amount of money . . . But for 4.6 million Americans living in poverty, \$2.10 could be the difference between having food on the table and going to bed hungry.”

“Dear Future Governor, you may not be able to help all 4.6 million Americans, but you can help more than 10 percent of the Massachusetts population suffering from poverty,” the video states, urging the next governor to increase the state’s minimum wage - the video was made before House and Senate leaders announced a joint plan to raise the minimum wage from \$8 to \$11 an hour.

Dlott and McNeil were among hundreds of Massachusetts high school students who produced videos for a contest run by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, entitled “Dear Future Governor.”

The contest was aimed at getting students engaged in the governor’s race by describing issues that affect them, and which they would like to see the next chief executive take on.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts received more than 100 entries, and chose the top three, handing out awards and citations from the Legislature on Tuesday morning at the State House.

The two-minute videos tackled everything from gun violence, gangs, and legalizing marijuana to climate change, veterans’ benefits, and campaign finance reform.

Burlington High School senior TJ Horgan won first place in the contest for his video that decried corporate influences in political campaigns.

“Money influences politicians in a major way,” Horgan sang in a rap. “I love Massachusetts. I love this state. But let’s take back our democracy before it’s too late.”

Rezwana Uddin, from Fall River, won third place for her video urging the next governor to expand a youth court program to other cities.

This was the first time the League of Women Voters ran a video contest. "We used to have an essay contest. We decided we needed to come into the 21st Century," said Nancy Brumback, a League volunteer.

Marilyn Peterson, co-president of the league, said the organization worried that students would not be interested. They were surprised by the response, and the number of entries they received.

"Some of them made us laugh, some of them made us cry," Peterson said.

All the gubernatorial candidates were invited to the event. Independent candidate Evan Falchuk was the only candidate in the audience when the videos were screened. Democratic candidate Donald Berwick also attended a portion of the event.

Falchuk told the News Service the students' videos were examples of straight, honest opinions needed in the political process.

"What's so interesting about them is young people speak the truth. They haven't learned yet to be like many grownups where they talk in vague platitudes, and it is very powerful," he said.

Falchuk said young people want to be engaged in the political process.

"People think that young people are apathetic, but it is not true," he said. "They may not be inspired by what they see."

The videos can be viewed on the League's website, [www.lwvma.org](http://www.lwvma.org).

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06/17/2014

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