

Voting Season  
Staff writer Lydia Foster

As voting season approaches, St. Andrew's Seniors prepare to cast their ballots in the Mississippi governor's election for the first time. The election primarily centers on our current governor, Tate Reeves, representing the Republican Party, and Democratic candidate, Brandon Presley. This election introduces new opportunities for these high-school seniors as this will be their first time engaging in the democratic process.

In a closely contested election this year, numerous seniors are eager to exercise their new voting rights, recognizing their pivotal role in shaping their state's future. The pressing question for many of these seniors revolves around where and how to cast their votes. In response to these concerns, Alex Foster, a Senior and Secretary of State Student Ambassador, has offered a range of valuable tips, providing guidance and clarity on the voting process.

Foster began by emphasizing the basics, stating, "If you are a student, you must be at least 18 years old before November," Foster said, "which is the month that the elections take place." Foster also specified that when registering to vote, individuals place their names into their local registration system and declare they possess the right and ability to vote. Casting a vote is often perceived as more challenging than registering, as one must take time out of their work or school day to do so. Voters should expect to stand in line in line whether it is cold, wet, or rainy.

An alternative to voting in person is voting by absentee, either in person or by mail, prior to the assigned voting day. For in-person absentee voting, the person eligible to vote absentee would cast their vote at their county's Circuit Clerk's office. Voting via mail, however, requires the voter to contact the local Circuit Clerk so they can mail the application. To qualify for absentee voting, voters must visit their County Circuit Clerk to confirm that they are a registered voter and fill out an Official Application for Absent Elector's Ballot to check off which absence excuse they are applying for. Some of these excuses

include being a student, teacher, any person who is outside of their county for any reason on election day, any person with a physical disability, whether permanent or temporary, anyone who is required to work on election day, and anyone who is 65 years or older.

Student Body President Caroline Lowery offers her opinion about the importance of local elections in our community. “You want to have a representative that believes in your cause and can actually represent the population’s interests,” Lowery said. “It’s also important to make sure that the representative you are voting for represents not only older populations or middle-aged people but also younger voters.” Foster also highlights why a senior in high school’s vote counts. “Every vote counts. It’s all important,” Foster said, “Every single vote brings more attention to whatever you are voting for because you are trying to bring support and attention to their cause.” The electoral process allows everyone to see the number of people who voted for a certain politician in an election through a local news channel or online. While in office, the elected politicians might try to pick out some of the most important values of their competitors that many of the electors liked and use to satisfy people while they are in office. By doing so, these politicians aim to satisfy the population's preferences. This strategy, sometimes referred to as “bipartisan compromise,” allows politicians to broaden their support and work towards achieving common goals.

In the upcoming Mississippi Governor's Election, the race is fixed on the two leading contenders: Republican frontrunner Tate Reeves and Democratic frontrunner Brandon Presley. As the current governor, Tate Reeves has pledged to keep the culture that forms the state's quality of life while also promising economic growth that benefits all Mississippi families. His priorities encompass enhancing Mississippi's education system, criminal justice reform, healthcare accessibility, workforce development, and overall economic prosperity. On the other hand, Brandon Presley, who formerly served as one of Mississippi's youngest mayors from 2001 to 2007 in Nettleton, implemented tax reductions and successfully balanced the city's budget. His subsequent role as the youngest Public Service Commissioner saw him expand internet access and save 6 billion dollars in taxpayer funds. As a candidate, Presley has committed to tax reduction, job creation, combating corruption, and enhancing healthcare services.

With this year's election being important to many first-time voters, Lowery highlights the importance of voting: "When you are at the age to vote, it is very important to actually use your right to speak up and vote for people that you want to be in office," Lowery said. "If you don't, you're not maximizing your democratic privileges."