

Teenage Lawmaker Could Make History as Youngest-Ever Politician

At 17, most high school seniors focus on prom, graduation, and college. But that's not always the case.

Saira Blair is not your ordinary teenager. It's impressive enough that she graduated summa cum laude from Hedgesville High School.

She could also become the youngest person ever to serve in West Virginia's state legislature as a delegate.

Not Too Young to Serve

At the ripe old age of 17, Blair defeated three-term delegate, Larry Kump, in the Republican primary.

"I really started to get involved at age 6 when my father was elected," Blair said. "There I started going to meetings and attending the dinners. But I never saw it as something I particularly wanted to be involved with until my junior year in high school when I attended a program called Youth in Government."

From that point, Blair realized that despite her age, she didn't have to wait to serve.

"I realized that I am able to use this opportunity to show other young people that we don't need to wait to when we are 30, 40 or 50," she said. "To understand conservative principles in that you know we don't have to keep moving forward in the direction that millennials are expected to go."

So, Blair got to work, first by reaching out to voters with close to a thousand handwritten letters. Her friends helped

out with signs and phone calls.

The Next Generation

This all comes naturally to Blair. Her dad, Craig Blair, is a state senator.

"When I told him I was interested in running, he was stunned. He was completely surprised, he had no idea, he was shocked," she said. "He didn't understand that I had been, you know, I guess, listening in and he had been mentoring me for 10 years."

In addition to her supportive family, Blair brings another important key to this effort.

"I don't think if I had as strong a faith as I did that I would be able to see that I'm trying to do this for a greater purpose and to help all young people and the state of West Virginia," Blair said.

It sure has helped her through the campaign process. But she's not the only one in this race who knows Jesus.

In the fall, Blair will go up against Democrat Layne Diehl.

"My faith is very important to me. It has been since I was saved when I was 7 years old. And I remember that very, very clearly," Diehl said.

Diehl sees a lot of positives coming from this contest against a teenage opponent.

"It certainly doesn't bother me. I think that God can use anybody regardless of what their age is or what experience that they have," Diehl said.

"I think my overall reaction was positive because I do think it is important to have young people involved in our political process and representing people statewide and throughout the

country as the future does belong to our next generation.”

The Issues

The future includes improving the economy and that means jobs.

“In the state of West Virginia a lot of kids get their good public education here. And we have a thing called the Promise Scholarship, which is a scholarship to students and for students for secondary education and it’s paid for by the state,” Blair said.

“A lot of students use that then when they are done with their high school and college education. They have to leave the state because they cannot find a good paying job,” she explained.

“I think jobs is very critical to that, but not any job. We need to have good paying jobs,” Diehl said. “I think we need to diversify our industry base in West Virginia so we are not just relying on one or two industries.”

While this race will touch issues, it is much different than any other in the country.

“I have received hundreds of emails from people across not just the country, but across the world, just young people, people in their late 20s,” Blair said. “It’s just amazing to hear their support and how they are excited to become involved.”

All because of a 17-year-old who believes it’s never too early to make a difference.