

Anna Claire Tilley, a rising junior at Southside High School in Ft. Smith, was not raised in a family that sits quietly by and observes. She has learned by example and been encouraged to be aware, involved, engaged and look forward to the time when she is fully able to participate in our political system.

When Anna Claire's older sister, Josie, turned 18, she witnessed first hand there were unnecessary barriers to carrying out your civic duty. Only a handful of her sister's peers registered to vote, although not for lack of interest. Watching those who did attempt the process, she soon came to the realization that the system was archaic, cumbersome, extremely time consuming and just basically a hassle. Not only does the current system discourage the newly eligible, but most likely new Arkansas residents and those that are homebound, at minimum. It is a turn-off to anyone, even to those who were truly excited to vote.

Anna Claire's awareness of civic duty was not only influenced by her family, but by her involvement with Girl Scouts of America. She is working to earn Girl Scout Gold, which is comparable to Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout Rank. In order to achieve this honor—which only 5% of those eligible obtain according to Wikipedia—you commit to an in-depth project that help tackles an issue you see as extremely important and a challenge to our world today. As the stars collided, so did her passion to improve the voter registration system in Arkansas and earn the honor of Girl Scout Gold.

Although this seems a pretty lofty challenge for a 16 year old, this was not the first big project Anna Claire had tackled. To achieve Girl Scout Silver, she worked with OG&E and the local Parks Commission to install hammock hangouts she designed at Fort Smith Parks and the Fort Smith Girl Scout Office.

Anna Claire did extensive research of voter registration across the country to prepare her project for approval. She realized that potential new voters were more familiar and comfortable with online registration—whether for school, college testing or other applications and activities. As we spoke, she brought attention to facts from the National Conference of State Legislatures—a bi-partisan, non-government organization.

- Currently, 37 states and the District of Columbia have online registration. Oklahoma is phasing in and will have full online registration in 2020.
- In Arizona, it costs \$.03 to process an online registration versus \$.83 for paper.
- Implementation costs ranging from \$250,000-\$1.8 million in larger states have not only been absorbed into state budgets but have been paid for with Help America Vote Act funds or have acquired one-time appropriations.

After approval by a state-wide Girl Scout committee of mentors, Anna Claire hit the ground running. She has traveled to the state capitol in Little Rock to meet with stake-holders, spoken at county

party meetings, and received a positive response from both the GOP and Democratic parties of Sebastian County. She received support and approval from her principal and vice-principal at Southside High and held a voter registration at the end of the past school year. She has additional registrations planned prior to upcoming elections and for out-going seniors next year. She has also started the Facebook page Register Online Arkansas to draw awareness and provide updates.

Anna Claire looks forward to on-line voter registration system in Arkansas becoming reality, obtaining Girl Scout Gold and most importantly encouraging political awareness and activism in more Arkansans

For additional information:

<https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/highest-awards/gold-award.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_Award_\(Girl_Scouts_of_the_USA\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_Award_(Girl_Scouts_of_the_USA))

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx>