

# Atlanta Journal Constitution

## July 9, 2004

### **ELECTION 2004: Rookie voters volley for convention power play**

Andrea Jones - Staff  
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During the last presidential election, Adam Nisbet wasn't old enough to vote. But that didn't stop the 17-year-old from parking in front of the television set to watch hours of the Democratic National Convention.

"That was when I first got really interested in politics," he said. "My dad and I were really obsessed."

Nisbet will have a front row seat in Boston for the convention that begins July 26. And the 21-year-old political science major will help nominate a candidate for president as one of 104 Georgia Democratic delegates.

Nisbet, a rising senior at Georgia College & State University, is one of a few young delegates from around the state, some of them not old enough to rent a car or even to share a post-convention cocktail.

Amid the fanfare, fund-raising, balloon-dropping and schmoozing, these young people will get the chance to rub elbows with political powerhouses, governors and gadflies at the biggest events of the quadrennial election season.

Nisbet said he decided to run for convention delegate after watching friends go off to the war in Iraq. "I wanted to have a seat at the table," said the native of Gray, a small town in Middle Georgia.

So in April, Nisbet gathered his buddies at the Baldwin County Courthouse, hosted a barbecue and started campaigning. He passed out toy soldiers and gave a speech about why he wanted to go to the Democratic National Convention.

"The best part was that I got a lot of my friends registered to vote," he said. "Now we've got even more college students with a vested interest."

To snag a spot as a delegate, candidates must gather support from local voters. Chosen in the spring, the delegates have several months to get ready for the big week.

Andrew Dill, president of UGA's College Republicans, also is heading off to a national convention this summer. At age 20, Dill is the youngest Georgia delegate to the Republican National Convention in New York.

The Jacksonville, Fla., native has been going door-to-door on the campaign trail this year, helping local Republican candidates spread the word. Being a delegate,

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Dill said, is a special honor.

Even with the \$300-a-night room at the Ritz-Carlton --- the Georgia delegation drew one of the most expensive accommodations by chance --- Dill said the six-day convention in August should be worth the cost. He's bunking with three other college students, two of whom are alternate delegates.

"Going to the national convention feels like it's the end of a long process that took a lot of hard work," Dill said. "But it'll be great to represent the other young Republicans from around the state."

One Georgia delegate to the Democratic National Convention was in middle school the last time a president was elected. Clayton Adams of Blairsville said his high school principal convinced him he should run for a spot in the delegation. Adams said the principal was approached by friends to run herself, but instead wanted to have a young voice at the convention. Adams just barely met the minimum age for delegates, which is 18.

Both parties have been trying to reach out to younger voters, partnering with MTV's Choose or Lose campaign and sponsoring essay contests.

Adams, who was president of his senior class and of the student council at Union County High, said he was "pretty surprised" when he found out he was going to the convention.

"It all happened so quick," Adams said. "But I think it's going to end up being really fun." It'll be a last hoorah before he heads off to Tusculum College in eastern Tennessee.

While Adams says he plans to have a good time, it's unlikely things will get too rowdy. His convention roommate? His dad.

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