

Editorial: EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE

Many imagine politics to be the art of getting elected and, once elected, staying in office; but there is more to politics than simply running for office. Politics describes the processes whereby people, individuals and groups, interact to provide for the needs of society.

Everything we do is affected by politics: garbage collection, snow removal, drinkable water, available electricity, driving age. All are factors influenced by decisions made at one or more of the many levels of government.

To ensure that our political system functions properly, our citizenry must become involved. The greater the popular involvement, the broader the power base, and the less influential special interest groups will be.

Because of this, we should run for office, encourage and work for honest and capable candidates, and communicate our views to elected and unelected officials by letter, telegram, telephone call and, if necessary, peaceful demonstration.

The best way to insure that our political system is capable of solving its problems is for each citizen (of voting age) to participate; to cast her-his ballot at each and every general, primary, school board and special election.

All citizens regardless of race, religion, color or sex who are 18 years or older are eligible to vote. Encourage your parents, friends, and others of voting age to exercise their right to vote.

Popular participation in our political system is ultimately measured by voting turnout. Election turnouts rarely exceed 65 percent and primary turnouts rarely surpass 40 percent. Only 46 percent of those eligible to vote – registered and unregistered – voted in 1976. In the 1978 off-year Congressional elections, only 35 percent of those eligible to vote nationwide actually voted.

In relation to other western democracies, America's voting record is poor. Some might say that those who do not register and do not vote do not care. Others retort that registration and voting procedures are too difficult. Yet, the ratio of registered voters to those that vote was 80 percent in 1976, so it would appear that if one is registered to vote, it is likely that she-he will vote.

To make the political process best respond to popular needs, voting must be encouraged so that these needs are registered. Making it easier to vote facilitates popular participation in the process.

The first step in easing voting is to encourage registration. Voter registration is often held during periods where voter interest is minimal. Voter interest does not peak until Election Day. Quite often, prospective voters meander to the polls in November and are surprised to discover that they cannot vote; they did not register by legislatively imposed deadlines.

Instant registration at the polling places is the best way to provide potential voters access to the polls. This would require state or federal legislation.

In the meantime, current registration regulations could be eased, the time and hours of registration could be extended, and new facilities could be provided. In addition, Election Day could be made a national holiday so that everyone could easily go to the polls without worrying about running to the local polling place early in the morning before work or just before closing, after coming home late in the evening.

DO NOT FORGET TO VOTE ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4.

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