

Why should you vote?

The privilege of an American Citizen to vote is the right that defines our democracy. By exercising this fundamental right, we protect all the other rights of our constitution. The vote is an expression of equality, neither wealth nor fame or power can make one person's vote count more than another person's vote.

Yet many potential voters say "my vote doesn't count and it doesn't directly effect their lives". Others say that they don't vote because only those with money can effect government. Still others say that they do not have the time nor the resources to be informed about all of the candidates or the issues and besides their one vote will not make a difference. There are many other reasons given by Massachusetts citizens for not voting, yet every vote counts. Voting is the way to tell politicians and government officials what is important to us.

It is all about our taxes, our jobs, our neighborhoods, our health insurance, our children's education, our justice system. It's about you, your family and your neighbors. The state office holders and members of congress we elect influence all aspects of our lives. Here are some reasons to vote on election day.

It's your money. The member of congress you vote for will decide how much of our wealth to allocate for public services and defense, how to distribute the tax burden and their intent for government regulations.

It's your health care. Action by members of congress has made health insurance and services accessible to thousands of Mississippians but many are still uninsured. Their decisions on healthcare issues and Medicare help to determine your access for health care.

It's you job. The Congress influences what job training is available, health insurance through your employer, fairness in hiring, job and pension security, workplace safety and what industries may locate in Mississippi.

It's your highway systems. The population and traffic are growing rapidly in the state. Your members of congress deal with legislation that determines how much money is available to help build highway. What federal funds are available to support various types of public transit including trains and buses.

It's the air you breathe and the water you drink. Your members of congress make decisions that determine pollution standards, enforcement strategies and budgets for environmental programs.

It's your neighborhood. Your members of congress make decisions that influence crime prevention activities, laws and law enforcement, safe and affordable homes. They help to identify federal funds to help statewide and community projects that enhance our quality of life.

It's your children and their education. Members of congress can help or hinder families trying to raise their children. They help to set public education policy that will affect how well prepared your children and grandchildren will be for the future. The decisions that they make affect the quality and cost of higher education as well.

The officials that we elect affect every aspect of our lives. Every voter has the opportunity to make personal decisions and influence the future. Although many election contests are won by comfortable margins, some have been so close that a single vote has made the difference between winning and losing. Some notable decisions resulting from a single vote include:

- In 1776, one vote gave America the English language instead of German
- In 1845, one vote brought Texas into the Union.
- In 1868, one vote saved Andrew Johnson's presidency.
- In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States of America
- In 1921, one vote in the Tennessee legislature ratified the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution and gave women the right to vote.
- In 1941, one vote saved selective service—just weeks before Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Remember, the sum total of 2006 election decisions will have important consequences locally and statewide. Even if the result is not close, each vote sends a message: an overwhelming majority can give a candidate a mandate or a large minority can suggest that perhaps the winner should compromise to represent citizens effectively.

Remember, to vote on the Election Day, November 7th and let your vote be the one that makes the difference.

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