



COMMUNIQUE

IMPORTANCE OF VOTING ESPECIALLY FOR UNION MEMBERS

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Why You Should Vote In This Year's Elections

It is not just the president on the ballot

How much the next president can do depends on which political party controls the Senate and the House. The size of those parties' majorities also makes a difference.

A filibuster-proof supermajority in the Senate, for instance, can enable or cripple a president much more decisively than a simple majority.

Higher turnout makes our democracy more representative

Many Americans who support labor-friendly policies do not bother voting — particularly in elections when the presidency is not at stake.

Voting is a right generations of Americans struggled to win and people in other countries are still fighting for

Citizens may take their right to vote for granted, but it wasn't that long ago when entire groups of the population — like women and African-Americans — were denied that right. Women gained suffrage in 1919, meaning the grandmothers of many not-voting millennials were alive during a time when they were prohibited from casting a ballot.

Voting is your voice

Voting is an important, meaningful way to back the issues you care about — and the representatives you think can best effect the changes you want to see. If nothing else, voting gives you a justifiable right to complain about your elected officials. Your grievances will carry more weight if you speak out as a voter trying to hold your candidates accountable for their promises.

Voting. Everyone talks about it. Not enough actually do it.

There is so much hype about voting. We are encouraged by our parents and families to vote. Politicians tell us we need to vote. And even our union reminds us to cast our vote on Election Day. Yet, too many still ask "what's the big deal; why should I bother"?

Voting — an expression of opinion or preference. Considering how many things in the United States are decided by voting, more people should be running to the polls. President, governors, state and federal legislators, and judges are all voted on by the general population.

"Considering how much of our government, and everything else for that matter, revolves around voting and elections, it would seem likely that more of us would be rushing to the voting booth," said CWA Local 1180 President Arthur Cheliotis. "No matter how many times people are told that voting is a right and a responsibility, that voting is in the best interests of all of labor, that voting is a necessity for labor unions to succeed, not enough of us actually head to the polls."

According to published reports, the 2008 US Census Bureau says that only 63% of all people registered to vote actually did so. That doesn't seem like such a horrible number until you realize that only 72% of Americans are even registered to vote in the first place. In reality, only 45% of Americans are voting in elections even though the general populace has the power to sway this country.

Here's a quick history lesson from constitutioncenter.org: Amendment XXVI gives young adults between the age of 18 and 21 the right to vote. The measure is another in a line of constitutional changes that expanded the right to vote to more citizens. At the time of the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, most states limited voting to white, male citizens who were over the age of 21.

It took 82 years for African American slaves to gain a constitutional right to vote, 132 years for women's suffrage and 183 years for those 18 to 21 years old to join the voting population. The impetus for this change was the passage of amendments to the Voting Rights Act in 1970 that set 18 as the minimum voting age for both federal and state elections.

The problem is that young adults and minorities often see little value in actually voting for anything other than President. What they don't realize is that everyday things like college financial aid, the opportunity for jobs, and how much they pay in taxes are all controlled by politicians. So in reality, casting a vote in your late teens and early 20s actually does make a difference. According to an article in the New York Times, "In one of the more pleasant surprises of this presidential campaign, young Americans are voting in big numbers, contributing to some unexpected results so far. This is the first presidential campaign in which people age 18 to 29

make up the same proportion of the electorate as do baby boomers — about one-third. This year, the youth turnout for both parties in the primaries so far is rivaling 2008, the year of Barack Obama's first campaign."

That's the good news. However, while the U.S. may be the world's oldest continuous democracy, we won't remain a democracy if people don't vote. Reports show that this country had the ninth lowest voting rate among the 35 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (huffingtonpost.com). The 2008 presidential election, in which the first African American had a chance to lead our nation, saw more people register to vote than in recent history.

The excitement and enthusiasm that surrounded that election year, and the subsequent 2012 election year, gave Americans something to be proud of. Everyone wanted to be a part of history in casting their vote to put a non-traditional white male in the Oval Office.

The same type of invigoration and rejuvenation in the American spirit that President Obama instilled in our youth and black populations, is what Bernie Sanders did in this election cycle. According to that same New York Times article, "Many find it odd that the 74-year-old Sanders would have this appeal. But John Della Volpe wasn't surprised. Surveying young voters in November 2015, Della Volpe, the director of polling at the Harvard Institute of Politics, noted that support for Sanders among potential voters age 18 to 29 had rocketed from 1 percent to 41 percent in about six months. Asked what they valued most in a candidate, young voters said integrity, level-headedness, and authenticity, in that order. Political and business experience were far down the list."

Young voters have typically been tough to motivate. They just don't see the value in voting. They want to take on active rolls in campaigns. They want to volunteer. They just need a reason to do so. And there's one of the underlying problems with getting different age groups out to vote. There needs to be a reason.

Fast forward to the November 2016 election and that enthusiasm has significantly waned. Voters have said time and again that there just isn't anyone worth voting for so they won't be going to the polls. As a labor union, members must spread the word that nothing can be further from the truth. The race for president is not the only seat New Yorkers will be voting on, as our state Senators and Assemblymembers are also on the ballot, as are all Congressional seats and one U.S. Senate seat from New York, numerous local judges and other seats. But it's the race for president that's going to come down to the wire.

It's beyond baffling to hear Americans of all ages say they aren't going to vote. Consider this: if just one person decides not to vote and convinces 10 friends to do the same, and those 10 friends each convince 10 more friends not to vote, this country will have a huge "snowball effect" of no one voting.

As union members, our votes hold a lot of weight. CWA and Local 1180 spend ample time scrutinizing candidates and throw their weight behind those who will be labor friendly and work with unions on issues and causes of importance to our members. Since there is strength in numbers, if members get behind the labor-endorsed candidates and all head to the polls, we can succeed in putting the right politicians in office. With major issues in this election centering on wages and income inequality, union members are expected to turn out in record numbers, according to Cheliotas.

He said that as a country, we need to work together to stem a system that is controlled by the rich and corporations, a conclusion that is backed by recent research of political scientists.

According to PewResearchCenter, the economy and terrorism are the top two issues for voters this fall. Overall, 84% of registered voters say that the issue of the economy will be very important to them in making their decision for president and 80% say terrorism will be an important determining factor. Other top-ranking issues of important in how Americans will cast their vote are foreign policy, health care, gun control and immigration. An open seat on the U.S. Supreme Court also weighs in to some voters' decision making.

"These are issues of importance across the board, regardless of which populace you fall into," Cheliotas said. "And these are the issues that Local 1180 and CWA have delved into when deciding which candidates to support.

"Being a member of a union and exercising your right to vote should be something you set aside time for on Election Day," he said. "No matter what your age, religion, gender or color, we all need to vote. We are the 99%. Our voices must be heard. As individuals, no one hears us. As union members, united for the causes we believe in, our roar is deafening."

Cheliotas said that no matter what, every American should get out to vote if we are going to keep this country as a true Democracy.